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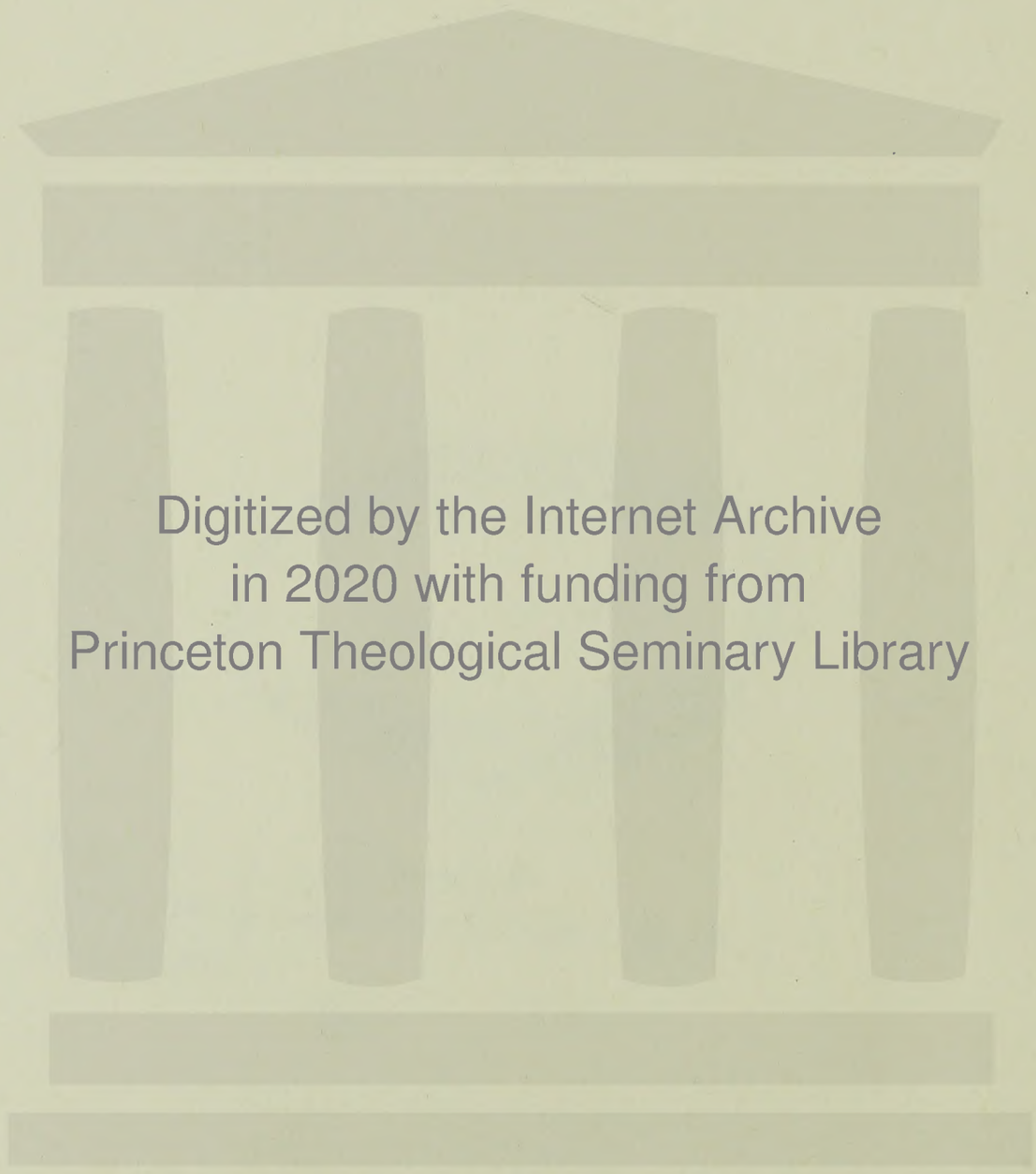

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CONTENTS

PAGE

EDITORIAL 1

ARTICLES

Mark 10:1-12: Text of Divorce or Text of Interpretations?
Mark K. George 4

French Fries and Tomato Ketchup: How Is It Possible to Exclude Them?
Morag Logan 23

Conspiracy Among Idols: A Critique of Deconstruction from the Afro-Caribbean Religions
Carlos F. Cardoza Orlandi 27

From Text to Context and Beyond: Ethical Implications
Reinhilde Ruprecht 44

Deconstruction and the Destruction of Meaning
Craig D. Atwood 54

The Divorce of Text and Meaning
Susan J. Dunlap 64

BOOK REVIEWS

Literary Criticism and the Gospels: The Theoretical Challenge by Stephen D. Moore
James Hanson 68

Heirs of Paul by J. Christiaan Beker
Mark Harding 71

Königsherrschaft Gottes und himmlischer Kult im Judentum, Urchristentum und in der hellenistischen Welt ed. by Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer
Loren T. Stuckenbruck 74

Awash in a Sea of Faith: The Christianizing of the American People by Jon Butler
Craig D. Atwood 78

The Presbyterian Controversy: Fundamentalists, Modernists, and Moderates by Bradley J. Longfield
Paul C. Kemeny 82

The Theology of John Fisher by Richard Rex
Howard Louthan 85

Systematic Theology, vol. 1, by Wolfhart Pannenberg, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley
William N. A. Greenway, Jr. 88

Tragic Vision and Divine Compassion: A Contemporary Theodicy by Wendy Farley
Gregory William Love 91

Women in Travail and Transition: A New Pastoral Care ed. by Maxine Glaz and Jeanne Stevenson Moessner
Carol Cook 95

Handbook for Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling ed. by Howard W. Stone and William M. Clements
Nancy J. Gorsuch 97

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS 101

Editorial

On November 13, 1991, the doctoral candidates of the Princeton Theological Seminary community gathered to examine a deconstructive reading by Mark George of Mark 10:1-12. One of the aims of the forum was to discuss a contemporary approach to hermeneutics. George's paper is the lead article of this issue of *Koinonia Journal.*

Given that hermeneutics is about interpreting texts, George's article uses a particular text, Mark 10:1-12, as an example of the ambiguity in texts and the play in language which resist a logo-centric notion of "meaning." Although this passage is *about* a teaching on divorce, what it *does,* according to George, is provide an example of the endless process of supplementation within language, in which "meaning" is always being deferred through an endless chain of supplementation. There is always only interpretation.

One person from each of the area departments was asked to prepare a response to George's article. Morag Logan responded for the biblical studies department; Carlos Cardoza Orlandi for missions and ecumenics; Reinhilde Ruprecht for theology; Craig Atwood for history; and Susan Dunlap for practical theology.

In her response, Morag Logan asks whether George's approach opens to us a new appreciation of meaning or whether it leads to total meaninglessness. Carlos Cardoza Orlandi sees deconstruction as a philosophical tool that helps to explain the emergence of the Afro-Caribbean religions. He suggests, however, that decon-

struction lacks the elements necessary to understand these religions as political resistance against oppressive structures.

Reinhilde Ruprecht concentrates on George's understanding of hermeneutics. She applies traditional understandings of the hermeneutical problem to George's paper and focuses on George's treatment of logocentrism from the perspective of contextual ethics. Craig Atwood criticizes George's paper for failing to offer a self-critical hermeneutic which allows for any meaningful discussion of his paper or any other form of communication. Susan Dunlap argues that although deconstruction offers important contributions to biblical hermeneutics, it doesn't go far enough in its analysis of the social and political effects of a text.

Deconstruction represents an acute challenge to any community which treats a text as Scripture. It challenges not only the logocentrism of Western Protestantism, but also fundamental assumptions about the relationship of meaning and texts.

This challenge may prove to be valuable for the church—especially if it can help the church clarify the fundamental issues of how and why "Scripture" can function in any "normative" way for the believing community. What if we find that "normativity" is an outdated paradigm? Are there other, better paradigms for understanding how "Scripture" can support and bring healing to believers? Can deconstruction and the fragmentation it necessarily entails bring not only despair, but also repentance, healing, and strength?

Some have suggested that whatever value deconstruction may have for secular literary criticism, it cannot be useful for the believing community, since believing communities invest their sacred texts with normative authority. However, if deconstruction's challenge that all meaning is in some sense *invested,* rather than *discovered,* then its challenge is particularly appropriate for the believing community. The church may invest in alternative answers to deconstruction's challenge, but it will in any case be richer for having taken the challenge seriously.

The editors of *Koinonia Journal* present this collection of essays not to preserve a past discussion, but to enable and inform

continued discussion of the promise and problems of deconstruction for hermeneutics. In addition, this issue has an especially rich assortment of book reviews on a variety of important books for people involved in the advanced study of religion.

—LOREN L. JOHNS

Mark 10:1-12: Text of Divorce or Text of Interpretations?

MARK K. GEORGE

The claim of interpreters that the task of hermeneutics is to bring out "the meaning of the text" is a larger claim than texts themselves can bear. Such claims reveal more about the interpreter and the biases of the interpreter than they do about the "meaning" of a text. However, one must grant that what interpreters mean by this claim differs.

Friedrich Schleiermacher believed the hermeneutical task was to place oneself in the mind of the author ("inside" the author) and the author's historical situation in order that something new might emerge for the interpreter in this process. The interpreter is to understand the author, and the meaning of the author's text, better than did the author himself or herself (1977:64 §143).

Paul Ricoeur rejects Schleiermacher's idea of attempting to recover the mind of the author, arguing instead that the interpreter is to appropriate the meaning of the text itself, the direction of thought opened up by the text. The text opens up new modes of being in the world which give the interpreter a new capacity for knowing himself or herself (1976:92–93).

Hans-Georg Gadamer claims that literary texts stand before the interpreter and reader and confront their understanding with normative claims (1989a:41). Texts do this when they "come back into themselves" and "fulfill the true meaning of the text out of themselves." The encounter of an interpreter with a text produces

an event in which the merging of the horizon of the text and the horizon of the interpreter produces understanding of both the text's meaning and of the interpreter's self (1989b:304–306).

Although the approaches of these three interpreters differ, each approach suggests there is a "meaning" in the text which can be identified and articulated. These approaches fail to realize that all language in the text is bound within language itself, making claims for "*the* meaning of the text" untenable. While hermeneutics retains the task of interpretation, this paper will argue that no authoritative meaning resides "in" the text which can be articulated in language.

Given that hermeneutics is about interpreting texts, this paper will use a particular text, Mark 10:1-12, as an example of the ambiguity in texts and the play in language which resist a logocentric notion of meaning. For although this passage is *about* a teaching on divorce, what it *does* is provide an example of the endless process of supplementation within language, in which meaning is always being deferred through an endless chain of supplementation. There is always only interpretation.

MARK 10:1-12

> [1]And having set out from there, he came into the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan, and crowds gathered to him again; and again, as he was accustomed, he taught them. [2]And the Pharisees, having approached him, were asking him if it is lawful for a man to send away a woman, testing him. [3]Answering, he said to them, "What did Moses command you?" [4]And they said, "Moses allowed, 'To write a written statement of divorce, and to send away.'" [5]Jesus said to them, "On account of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. [6]But from the beginning of creation, 'Male and female he made them. [7]Because of this a man shall leave his father and mother and he will be joined to his wife, [8]And the two will be one flesh.' So no longer are they two, but one, flesh. [9]Therefore, what God joined together let no person separate." [10]And in

> the house, again the disciples asked him concerning this. [11]And he said to them, "Whoever should send away his wife and marry another commits adultery against her. [12]And if she, having sent away her husband, should marry another, she commits adultery."[1]

This text is a unit, separated from what precedes it by the transition of 10:1, a geographic change, and from what follows by a change in what the text is about, namely children.[2] Mark 10:1-12 is ostensibly about divorce. Mark[3] inscribes an account of an encounter between Jesus and the Pharisees (10:2-9) and then of Jesus and the disciples (10:10-12). Mark uses the historical present in his transitional comments (10:1, 11), which may be an attempt at making the event more real to the reader. Such a move by Mark may be an attempt to hold out the promise to the reader of recapturing the immediacy and presence of the speech event between Jesus and the Pharisees.

Other commentators have gone on to provide interpretations of this encounter between Jesus and the Pharisees. If one accepts the thesis of Markan priority in the Gospels, Mt 19:1-12 provides one of the first interpretive moves of this account, for Matthew's placement and arrangement of the narrative is different. In Matthew, the Pharisees ask Jesus if it is lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause (19:2). He responds with his appeal to God's intention at creation (19:4-6). It is the *Pharisees* who ask Jesus about what Moses wrote (19:7), to which Jesus makes a response similar to his remark of Mark 10:5-6 (Mt 19:8). Jesus then adds an exception clause (19:9), which is absent from Mark. When the disciples query Jesus (19:10), they do not ask him "again concerning this" (Mark 10:10), but ask about the expediency of marriage at all, to which Jesus responds with an answer about eunuchs

[1] Author's translation.

[2] This is the accepted division of this text by the scholarly community, with Mark 10:1 generally seen as a transition verse (see Calvin 1972:242–243; Cole 1989:225–226; Williamson 1983:175).

[3] "Mark" will be used interchangeably with narrator in this paper. I acknowledge the fact that the identity of this narrator is unknown and unknowable.

(19:11-12). Matthew's interpretive moves are evident in the comparison of the two accounts as he rearranges the material. Yet despite the rearrangement, there is still an assumption that the full presence (meaning) of this event can be communicated, even if in a different form.

John Calvin sought to harmonize the two accounts, and in this he was not altogether alone (1972:377–385). Modern critics often compare the two accounts.[4] These commentators use the two texts to arrive at a number of interpretations, generally based on explaining the differences as a result of the different needs and situations of the authors.[5] All of these interpreters assume the existence of some original event which was shaped to fit the needs of the authors. Whether or not this redactional analysis is the purpose of these interpretations, the interpreters are able to reap a double benefit. That is, they both uncover the "original" saying of Jesus and they identify (and then speculate on) the particular contextual concerns of the authors.[6] By identifying what was the true saying of Jesus, the commentator can argue that she or he has reclaimed the full presence—the meaning—of the moment. Thus Mark's written account of the speech event between Jesus and the Pharisees—and Jesus and his disciples—has been successful. His account has conveyed the full presence, the meaning, of the event to the reader. With this in hand, the interpreter can provide an interpretation of that meaning for the modern audience.

Reading the text more closely, one sees that the text is not as forthcoming with a particular "meaning" as these interpretations would suggest. Ambiguity immediately confronts the reader of this text. Who is the *he* being referred to in 10:1-3? In 10:2-3, a pronoun is all that is used to refer to the subject, and its antecedent is ambiguous. Jesus is not named until 10:5, and the previous men-

[4] See Mann 1986:385–394; Catchpole 1974:92–127; Fitzmyer 1976:197–226; Condon 1980:40–51; Stein 1979:115–121; Kilgallen 1980:102–105.

[5] See Mann 1986:387–389, 393–394; Catchpole 1974:96–97; Fitzmyer 1976:205–208; Condon 1980:41–44; Stein 1979:116–118; Kilgallen 1980:105.

[6] This double benefit can be seen in several of these writers, all of whom openly express their interest in these benefits; see Herron 1982:273; Catchpole 1974:92; Fitzmyer 1976:223–226; Stein 1979:115–120.

tion of his name was back in 9:39. Mark apparently assumed it was Jesus, for he uses verbs in 10:1 with third person masculine singular endings to refer to Jesus in an attempt to limit this ambiguity.

However, this is Mark's interpretation of the antecedent of these pronouns, and apart from that interpretation one remains uncertain as to who is this *he* in 10:2-3, unless one has some foreknowledge or preconception about the passage. Aside from the interpreter exerting control over the text and limiting its ambiguity to Jesus (perhaps arguing that the form of the verb, or of the pronoun, refers back to the closest named person in the text), the interpreter is uncertain who is this *he*. The identity of this person must be left open at this point.

The Pharisees come to "him" and ask a question about divorce and the law (10:2). Why do the Pharisees come to "him" and ask "him" a question at all, much less a question about divorce? The narrator claims it is to test "him." For what are they testing "him"? Maybe they seek the "traditional" answer to this question, and their question is rhetorical. Maybe they seek an interpretation of the law which will settle all disputes over the question. If the latter is the case, then perhaps the narrator is right, the Pharisees *are* testing "him." If so, perhaps they are testing "him" for an authoritative interpretation, one which can be so definitive as to stop all other interpretation on this matter. To put it another way, they are testing "him" to see if he can mediate full presence to them. If "he" could mediate full presence to them in an authoritative interpretation, the question of divorce would be settled forever, since that presence and interpretation would never need to be interpreted. Maybe "he" can provide such an answer, and it is in this way that they are "testing" "him."

In answer to the Pharisees' question, "he" asks "them"[7] for the interpretation of someone else: "What did Moses command you?"

[7] "Them" also is placed in quotation marks because, while the Pharisees are the ones who asked the question, "they" answer in 10:4. The identity of "them" is ambiguous. We recall that "he" is teaching "them" (*presumably* the crowds) in 10:1, and "they" could be the same group as "them" in 10:1. Only by controlling

(10:3). The one from whom the Pharisees seek an authoritative answer in turn seeks an interpretation and "they" provide an answer. For a brief moment, this response holds out the possibility of providing "them" with an authoritative interpretation from Moses and the text, that "he" *can* provide an answer which will mediate full presence to "them."[8]

However, Moses provided an interpretation about a man sending a woman away, and what he did by inscribing his interpretation in language was to supplement any authoritative interpretation he might have experienced.[9] Once this happened, the presence and authority of that interpretation was held at a distance and became unattainable. Had his interpretation been truly authoritative or fully present, there would have been no need to ask "him" this question; Moses' interpretation alone would have settled any dispute.

Jesus, who is specifically (re)introduced at this point and becomes the only speaker for the next five verses (10:5-9), gives his own interpretation, which differs from that of Moses given by "them." Jesus quotes two different verses from Genesis (Gen 1:27; 2:24), placing them together in his interpretation. But ambiguity and a will to power over the text are present here. In 10:6 Jesus says "he" made them male and female. As in 10:1-4, who is this "he"? Taking this text of Genesis out of context, Jesus introduces ambiguity into the text of Mark, an ambiguity that can be limited only by controlling it. Jesus' appeal to creation is also a deceptive move, for the text to which he refers, Genesis, is likewise a text of Moses, a detail which is omitted in the text.

Jesus supersedes both Moses' text and interpretation by way of appeal to another text of Moses. He privileges the Genesis texts

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the ambiguity of this pronoun can one claim the respondents are the Pharisees in 10:4.

[8] This is to assume here the traditional belief that Moses wrote the five books of the Pentateuch, a belief the text itself suggests when "they" answer "his" question about what Moses commanded with a paraphrase from Deuteronomy.

[9] "Supplement" means both an adding to and a deferring, a substituting, a putting off. See below for further discussion of this idea.

over the Deuteronomy texts in his own interpretation by his own authority and will to power over the text. However, even these texts ultimately are not his final answer. In 10:9 Jesus supplements these texts with his own interpretation based on his own authority and states, "Therefore, what God joined together let no person separate." Jesus replaces a text (Deuteronomy) with a text (Genesis), then supplements that text with his own word by trying to anchor his interpretation through direct reference to "God," a term usually taken to invoke a transcendental signifier. Ironically, his own interpretation has in turn become a "text" inscribed in Mark.

That Jesus' own interpretation is not authoritative (in the sense that it should end all interpretation) is suggested by the interpretation he later gives to the disciples in the house (10:10-12). If he were able to provide such an authoritative interpretation, his interpretation would not be different from the one he gives the Pharisees. Yet in this second interpretation, Jesus does not refer at all to the Genesis texts, nor even to the question of divorce as it was posed by the Pharisees. Instead, he provides a new interpretation, this time concerning remarriage after divorce. If he were able to mediate the full presence of the transcendental signified, Jesus would be able to re-present it to the disciples: it would need no supplementation. This, Jesus cannot do. Every interpretation is open to further interpretation; none is authoritative, able to end the chain of supplementation and interpretation.

Interpreters from Matthew to modern times have given interpretations of the meaning of this passage to their audiences. A closer reading of it, however, suggests there is more ambiguity to the text than these interpreters allow. When considered from the point of view of language, this is not surprising. It might seem at first glance that various commentators have already looked at this passage in terms of its language.[10] However, this does not look at the role and function of language itself in communicating the meaning interpreters claim for this text. The dominant, often

[10] Many commentators have used technical language analysis in their interpretations; see Williamson 1983:175; Herron 1982:277–278; Ellingworth 1979:63–65; Catchpole 1974:97; Fitzmyer 1976:204; Condon 1980:42–44.

unconscious assumption of those commentators is that the text and its language have the ability to refer to something outside the text itself in some one-to-one fashion because each word (or signifier) of language is defined by some absolute, essential property (a transcendental signifier).[11]

Ferdinand de Saussure, one of the originators of modern linguistic theory, argued against such an understanding of language. Language, Saussure argued, is comprised of a system of signifiers. Each signifier is arbitrary, deriving its meaning not from its direct connection to an absolute property, but by the differences which distinguish it from other signifiers.[12] "Signification always depends on difference: contrasts, for example, between food and not-food which allow 'food' to be signified" (Culler 1979:164). In other words, the signifier *pan* signifies by virtue of the fact that it is both different from, and not, the signifier *man, fan, pant, blue, Moses, livre,* or *Insekt.* Saussure went on to argue that since the signifier is a purely relational unit, language can only signify differences, without positive terms. That is, language has no absolute, essential properties (Culler 1979:164, 166).

Jacques Derrida took Saussure's idea even farther.[13] Whereas for Saussure language is a closed system in which signifiers signify in a system of difference and negation, for Derrida language does not exist within a closed system. Although a signifier differs from, and is not, every other signifier, traces of those signifiers are present within it. While *pan* is not *man, fan,* or *livre,* traces of each of these are necessarily present in *pan* because *pan* is not any of these. The "meaning" of *pan* is thus a constant flickering between absence and presence, between the signifier that is there (*pan*), and all the other signifiers that are absent (*man, fan, livre*). The other is always present because it is banished by the signifier: it is

[11] See Ricoeur and Gadamer, both of whom speak of texts referring to something outside the text.

[12] Jonathan Culler provides a helpful summary of Saussure's views in his article, "Jacques Derrida" (1979:166).

[13] This outline of Derrida's thought is cursory at best. Derrida resists all attempts to define deconstruction precisely. Indeed, he claims that all attempts to do so are false. "All sentences of the type 'deconstruction is X' or 'deconstruction is not X' a priori miss the point" (Derrida 1988:4).

not, it is different from the signifier. And yet the signifier only signifies because the other is absent, is deferred.

This dialectic is captured by Derrida as *différance.* "There is both a passive difference already in existence as the condition of signification and an act of differing or deferring which produces differences" (Culler 1979:165). Thus *différance* is the systematic play of differences and traces of differences by which elements refer to one another. The distinction between presence and absence, between meaning and non-meaning, is never stable. It is always shifting, since no transcendental signifier (for example, God, Truth, or Humanity) exists which can end this flickering between presence and absence (Derrida 1974:143).

Derrida emphasizes the aspect of *différance* having to do with deferral when he speaks of supplementation. Because "meaning" is a constant flickering between absence and presence, meaning and nonmeaning, it must be supplemented. This supplementation adds to the meaning. It adds a surplus, cumulating and accumulating presence (Derrida 1974:144). But the supplement also supplements. In adding, it replaces. The supplement is an adjunct which takes-the-place-of (Derrida 1974:145).

Presence (meaning), which ought to be self-sufficient, is always supplemented in language. Presence must be conceived in language to be thought, since human beings become conscious of things through language. And once presence (meaning) is put into language, it is found lacking, in need of supplementation. Thus presence (meaning) is always both added to and deferred. There is a promise of presence (meaning) through this supplementation, but that presence or meaning is always already deferred, held at a distance (Derrida 1974:154–155).

The problem of language is that it is all interrelated. It is an infinite chain, "ineluctably multiplying the supplementary mediations that produce the sense of the very thing they defer: the mirage of the thing itself, of immediate presence, of originary perception. Immediacy is derived" (Derrida 1974:157). Thus there is no such thing as an original, fully present, or authoritative interpretation; all interpretation is secondary and derived. As for

writing, "the writer writes *in* a language and *in* a logic whose proper system, laws, and life his discourse by definition cannot dominate absolutely" (italics original).[14] Therefore the reading of a text cannot move directly and ineluctably outside the text to an external referent or signified whose content could take place outside of language (outside of writing in general). "*There is nothing outside the text* [there is no outside-text]; *il n'y a pas de hors-texte*" (italics original; Derrida 1974:158).

Supplementation is, as noted above, present in Mark 10:1-12. Indeed, supplementation and interpretation is all there is in the text. The Pharisees come to "him" for an authoritative interpretation in 10:2, but all "he" can do is ask for an interpretation himself and then go on to suggest further interpretations. Whether or not Moses based his interpretation on an experience of real (full) presence (through an encounter with God), he could only become conscious of it and express it in language, a move which supplemented that presence. And once this happened, the (full) presence and meaning of that experience was held at a distance. It was deferred and became unattainable. All that was left from that experience was hermeneutics—interpretations of texts and language—in an infinite chain. That the Pharisees are left only with interpretations is emphasized in "their" response as "they" paraphrase (and thereby interpret) Moses (10:4).[15]

[14] Derrida 1974:158. Western metaphysics holds that speech has an essential and immediate proximity with the mind, and therefore to real presence. Speech is thus "present to itself, to its signified, to the other, the very condition of the theme of presence in general" (Derrida 1974:8). In contrast to this, Derrida argues that since language is made up of differences, what can be said about writing can be said equally of speech. Neither is immediate to real presence. Every signifier is a purely relational unit, without absolute, essential properties—or real presence. In this way he inverts the hierarchy and orients language not on speech but on a generalized writing.

[15] The text "they" quote is based on Deut 24:1-4. "They" quote Moses as saying, "βιβλίον ἀποστασίου γράψαι καὶ ἀπολῦσαι" (United Bible Societies 1983:164). But two editions of the Septuagint, Rahlfs and Brooke-McLean, do not indicate that this is what Moses said. Rahlfs indicates the following for Deut 24:1b (which is paralleled by 24:3a; Brooke-McLean does not vary from this text): "καὶ γράψει αὐτῇ βιβλίον ἀποστασίου καὶ δώσει εἰς τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῆς καὶ ἐξαποστελεῖ αὐτὴν ἐκ

Narratively, both "his" question regarding what Moses commanded and Jesus' response to the Pharisees' question are acts of supplementation in the text. Like a supplement, they make a double move. As noted above, a supplement adds to meaning. It holds forth the possibility of the reappropriation and mediation of presence. The Pharisees have come to "him" asking that "he" mediate full presence to them, and "his" question at first holds out the possibility that presence can be found in Moses and the text. However, supplements also supplement. They add to replace. Once "they" answer the question, Jesus supplements Moses' interpretation by providing an interpretation of Moses. Jesus' interpretation adds to Moses' interpretation only to replace it (10:5). The possibility of the reappropriation and mediation of presence which "his" question holds forth is deferred by Jesus' interpretation of Moses. Presence (meaning) is once again deferred by the endless chain of supplementation in language.

Jesus' interpretation (10:6-9) also seems to hold forth the possibility of full presence and an authoritative interpretation. But because Jesus appeals to a text in which the activity of the transcendental signifier—God (if we limit the ambiguity of this signifier and assume it refers to God, as do most interpreters)—has been inscribed in language, that activity and signifier are supplemented.[16] The possibility of full presence and an authoritative interpretation are deferred in language.

We cannot know ~~God~~ fully in language. We must therefore place the word ~~God~~ under erasure, since ~~God~~ is both there and not

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τῆς οἰκίας αὐτοῦ" (Rahlfs 1935:329). One might want to argue on text-critical grounds that Rahlfs and Brooke-McLean do not exhaust all possibilities for textual variation. While this might be so, even if "they" *are* quoting verbatim what Moses wrote, that would not affect the argument of this paper. "They" provide an interpretation of Moses, who is providing an interpretation of something else, because that is all "they" can do, given that "they" must use language. The endless chain of supplementation holds whether "they" are quoting verbatim or paraphrasing.

[16] The editors of *The Greek New Testament,* 3d ed., provide their own interpretation of this text by printing the quoted texts in bold face type and footnoting their references, thus attempting to limit and control any confusion which might arise over the source or referents in these texts (see United Bible Societies 1983:164).

there in language, present and absent, yet we must necessarily write the signifier to demonstrate this condition. Because the activity of ~~God~~ had to be inscribed in language to be communicated and known, it has been supplemented by language—added to, yet endlessly deferred. Jesus' appeal is but another interpretation, another act of supplementation, promising presence and an authoritative interpretation, but holding it at a distance.

The differences between Jesus' interpretations in 10:5-9 and 10:11-12 point to another level of interpretation. The encounters between Jesus, the Pharisees, and the disciples have been inscribed by Mark. Mark's interpretation of the pronouns in 10:2-3 was noted above. Mark also interprets the encounter with the Pharisees as a test in 10:2, but it is ambiguous what sort of test this is. In the con-text (from *textus,* past participle of *texere,* "to weave," and *con,* "together") or weaving together of his text,[17] one might argue that Mark interprets the Pharisees' question as a test for which interpretive school "he" was from, Hillel or Shammai.[18] But this is only one interpretation. One might also argue (as is argued in this paper, which is also only one interpretation) that they test "him" for an authoritative interpretation that would end all interpretation on this question.

Perhaps neither the Pharisees nor Mark come to test "him" at all, but to *text* him. Textuality is written all over this text. Texts are central to the dialogue, and the answer given by Jesus was bound to be remembered by those (presumably) around him and itself to be inscribed in or as a text in an attempt to provide an authoritative, fully present answer. But once it was set down as Mark's text in language, it was interpreted, supplemented, and deferred.

Mark's interpretation also becomes apparent when the reader is told in 10:10 that the disciples ask Jesus again (πάλιν) concerning this. The question arises as to how the disciples could ask Jesus

[17] See Taylor for a helpful and informative discussion of texts and con-texts (1984:177–180).

[18] See Williamson, who argues that this is what the test concerns (1983:175–176).

about divorce *again* when they were not recorded as being at the encounter between Jesus and the Pharisees in the first place.[19]

There is also ambiguity in the text as to what *this* (τούτου) refers. Mark limits and controls the ambiguity of the text through his interpretation of the event. The encounter between Jesus and the disciples (10:10-12) takes place after the encounter between Jesus and the Pharisees (10:5-9), so the *again* and *this* in 10:10 can be taken to refer to the immediately preceding text.[20] Thus we begin to see the ways in which Mark himself provides an interpretation of what took place. Mark has become another link in the chain of supplementation, supplementing and deferring the presence and meaning of the event by inscribing it in language.[21]

This same process of endless supplementation—of interpretations of interpretations—continues with all who take Mark's text and interpret it. If Matthew used Mark as the basis for his text, he too becomes part of the chain of supplementation. Matthew's version of this text follows the parable of the unforgiving servant (18:23-35), rather than Jesus' "warnings about hell" (as the editors of the RSV have interpreted the teachings of Jesus) in Mark 9:42-50.

Comparison of the two texts also reveals where Matthew changed Mark's text. But Matthew is no closer to mediating full

[19] The disciples are not the only ones who are absent from Mark 10:1-9. Where is the crowd during the discussion of 10:2-9? Are they the "them" who respond in 10:4? And although we see the disciples asking Jesus about his interpretation in 10:10-12, what was the response of "them" and of the Pharisees to the answer of Jesus in 10:5-9? Mark leaves their response in the ambiguity of silence.

[20] This parallels the encounter between "he" or "him" and the Pharisees (10:1-4), which Mark places after Jesus has been teaching the disciples in 9:39-50. In this way the ambiguity about who "he" is can be limited and controlled and assumed to be Jesus. Ellingworth has also noted the difficulties in the text of Mark 10:10 and ascribes them to Mark (1979:65).

[21] If one argues Mark 10:10-12 is the result of a redactor's hand, this would only increase the amount of supplementation in the text. One would have to posit yet another hand in the creation of this text (beyond that of the anonymous "author"), who added 10:10-12 at this point for some unknown reason. This addition then changed the con-text of the text. Such a proposal is but another interpretation of the text, and may be based on the assumption that a unified text from one author would have no ambiguities.

presence to us in his text. Matthew is an interpretation of Mark which is an interpretation of Jesus and the Pharisees, both of whom give interpretations of Moses, who may have interpreted someone else; or, if he did have an experience of full presence, could only become conscious of and express it through language, a move which resulted in the supplementation of that experience. In like fashion, all subsequent commentators and interpreters, from John Calvin to the present paper, interpret and supplement the presence and meaning of Mark's (or Mark's and Matthew's) interpretation of Jesus and the Pharisees, which are interpretations of Moses, who may have interpreted someone else, which is an interpretation of . . . .. The chain of supplementation and interpretation goes on and on endlessly.

Mark 10:1-12 is *about* a question of the law and the legality of a man sending a woman away, but what the text *does* is make the legal question a foil by which language is shown to be an endless chain of supplementation and thus of the endless deferment of presence and meaning. Thus, the claims of Schleiermacher, Ricoeur, and Gadamer about the results of the hermeneutical process are too bold. The language of the text cannot bear the weight of such hermeneutical stands.

If we deconstruct a text (or texts), ~~with what are we left?~~ The response to such a question must itself be put under erasure, since it presumes the text has some meaning, some presence, beyond the text to which it can refer. This presence is endlessly deferred in language, as has been shown above. Thus we cannot ask the question, "With what are we left?" strictly speaking, since it presumes the existence of such presence. Yet in an attempt to provide some form of response, several things come to mind.

If we deconstruct a text such as Mark 10, we as interpreters are more than likely confronted with our own biases and assumptions about the text. We are also made aware of the pervasiveness of logocentrism in our language. We are asked what the Bible says about divorce, and we may think of Mark 10:1-12 and its parallels. In doing so we have predetermined what the text has to say: it is about divorce. We have controlled the play of language. We have

limited the play of signifiers and the ambiguity of the text by positing a unique, central, transcendental signified as the anchor of meaning. This center, be it God, Truth, humanity, Text, consciousness, common human experience, or anything else, has been believed to be self-evident and self-present, with an exact, fixed relationship between its signifier and signified (Derrida 1978:279–280; 1974:8; Berman 1988:203).

What deconstruction demonstrates is the fallacy of this belief. In the absence of presence, all signifiers in language are relative, caught within the play of language, thereby opening the text to a multiplicity of meanings. Where this places us as interpreters is perhaps similar to midrash, in which one finds multiple meanings. These meanings are welcomed as "another meaning" without necessarily limiting what interpretations are possible or preferred.

Deconstructive interpretations also break the grip which established methodologies maintain on the text. They free us from searching for either the original words of Jesus or the ways in which the narrator has shaped the story for whatever purpose of her or his own. Celebrating in the play of language, deconstruction allows interpretations to be heard which have been banished to the margins by the prevailing methodologies. The prevailing methodologies have been able to assert the priority of their interpretations only by controlling the language of the text and by forcing to a marginal position interpretations which challenge them. Deconstruction not only does not banish these interpretations, it seeks them out as a means of demonstrating the constructed nature of the prevailing methodologies. Deconstruction leaves us in a place where all interpretations are welcome and none is placed in a position of privilege over another. Texts are con-textual, a weaving together of experiences and interpretations within both texts and communities. No one interpretation can take priority over another, for each interpretation is only an interpretation of an interpretation without end, with no logos or Logos to end the play of language and allow one interpretation a position of dominance. Never fully present, "meaning is always in the process of forming, deforming, and reforming" (Taylor 1984:179). Thus new interpretations of the text can be heard.

Deconstruction makes us aware that there is no neutral place from which we as humans can interpret texts and search for a transcendental signifier (be that God, Truth, or anything else). This is not to say that such a transcendental does not exist. Indeed it may, but we as human beings cannot fully know or experience it because, as deconstruction makes quite clear, language is a *human* construct. We become conscious through it, we speak with it, we are bound by it; but it is not divine or transcendent. We make assumptions about what language is and how it works but forget that it too is a human construct.

Deconstruction makes us aware of this fact once again, and in making us aware of language, reshapes how we think about it. Since we become conscious of God only through language, such a theory of language implies that God cannot be fully known to us. To inscribe God in language is to inscribe God in an endless chain of supplementation.

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French Fries and Tomato Ketchup: How Is It Possible to Exclude Them?

MORAG LOGAN

To respond to this article, it is important to realize that I will be interpreting it. This places me in a position of interpreting a text regarding the interpretation of another text. This other text is itself a text which interprets other texts, which themselves are . . . , and so on. This endless chain points out a truth which is an important part of Mark George's paper.

Whatever we write about a text can never be more than secondary at best. In whatever we say, think, or write, we use language, we make interpretations, and we make many assumptions. We assume that we know what texts are about. We assume that we know what it means to ask what a "text" is "about." We assume that we know what a "text" is. Finally, we generally assume that we know things which are not texts. Deconstruction challenges all of this, all our ways of thinking and approaching the subjects we study.

With a deconstructionist approach we can never know all of what a text is about because there is no limit to the number of things a text is about. Meanings multiply endlessly. Language plays off language, meaning off meaning, and interpretation off interpretation.

The richness of meaning opened up by deconstruction is, I think, the promise, the exciting part of deconstruction. It is also, however, the disturbing part. I remain unsure whether deconstruction's critique leaves any workable way to say anything.

To follow the approach of the text I am interpreting, I return to texts, and I will start with the Mark George layer of text. Mark says, "Although this passage is about a teaching on divorce, what it does is provide an example of the endless process of supplementation within language, in which 'meaning' is always being deferred through an endless chain of supplementation" (1992:5). The first part of this statement is not new. It is generally understood (or assumed) that Mark 10:1-12 is a teaching on divorce. Does this, however, bear up under close scrutiny?

Divorce, according to the *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary,* is a legal dissolution of a marriage, or an action to terminate an existing relationship or union, as in to "divorce church from state" (p. 370). It comes from the Latin *divortium,* from *divertere, divortere,* to divert, or to leave one's husband.

Even if the etymology of *divorce* is completely left aside, it is questionable whether this text is about divorce as we know it. Mark 10:2 reads: "The Pharisees, having approached him, were asking him if it were lawful for a man to send away a woman." This is the original question put to "him" within this text. From this it seems that the text is about the rights of men to send away various women. At this stage of our process of reading, it is only by assumption that we form the idea that "the man" is married to "the woman." Only by an extraordinary leap can we assume that this text bears any relationship to a social phenomenon of our times, one which we choose to call divorce.

At the end of the passage we are considering, the statements made earlier are supplemented in the final statement by Jesus to the disciples (v. 11): "And he said to them, 'Whoever should send away his wife and marry another commits adultery against her, and if she, having sent away her husband, should marry another, she commits adultery.'" At this point, Jesus (or at least the text) interprets the earlier saying. He accords to the "she" an authority which "she" is not granted in the conversation with the Pharisees—the right herself to "send away."

At one level, this text talks primarily about the rights of men to send women away. This right is undermined in a statement by

Jesus (v. 9): "Therefore what God has joined, let no person separate." Thus, on one level, Jesus is attacking male rights and prerogatives. This is present in two ways, first by forbidding the male right in the conversation with the Pharisees, and second, by according to the woman the same right as the men in the conversation with the disciples.

However, on the basis of verse 9, we can with equal authority say that this text states that Jesus forbids all divorce. On the other hand, since this text refers to the autocratic action of one person in sending away another, we could argue that this text has nothing to do with what we call "divorce." Jesus, therefore, does not forbid divorce.

We could also interpret this text allegorically, viewing divorce as a general separation. We might therefore look for analogies of "the man" and "the woman" in Christ and his church, in church and state, the East and the West, Serbia and Croatia, or for that matter, in cats and dogs, or french fries and tomato ketchup.

Now we may not all agree with all or even any of these interpretations. The problem that arises with a deconstructionist approach is how to respond to different interpretative moves. As Mark George argues, "The prevailing methodologies have been able to assert the priority of their interpretations only by controlling the language of the text and by forcing to a marginal position interpretations which challenge them. Deconstruction not only does not banish these interpretations; it seeks them out as a means of demonstrating the constructed nature of the prevailing methodologies. Deconstruction leaves us in a place where all interpretations are welcome and none is placed in a position of privilege over another" (1992:15).

From a deconstructionist point of view, there is no position from which one can critique different interpretations or ethical assumptions. The absurd, the unethical, the historical, the feminist, and the theological (to mention only a few) are accorded equal claim in interpretation. Only by making untenable constructions can one say an interpretation is absurd, unethical—or historical, theological, or feminist.

Here lie both the possibilities and the problem. From a personal point of view, I would delight in a rich approach which allows the feminist, historical, theological, and literary all to interact with each other. Nevertheless, deconstruction puts me in a position of having to accept the absurd and the unethical. I must accept all readings as possible regardless of whether they are interesting or helpful. I must accept that they have as much claim to meaning as any other interpretation, since there is no way to prioritize meanings. Thus, deconstruction challenges our basic understandings of language and the limits often placed on the identification of "texts" and on their interpretation. This critique is not easily dismissed.

What are the implications of deconstruction's critique? First, deconstruction draws attention to broader and richer understandings of the play of language in a text and to the multiple meanings a text can hold. Following inevitably from this, however, there is no limit to the possible meanings of any text. All meanings must be seen as being equally valid. The first enriches and enhances our ideas and thoughts about texts and their meanings for us. The challenge, however, is this: Is it possible to take this creative approach without losing the possibility of meaning?

Conspiracy Among Idols

A Critique of Deconstruction from the Afro-Caribbean Religions

CARLOS F. CARDOZA ORLANDI

This article is dedicated to the people of Haiti and their struggle for the return of President Arístide and the search for dignity in the midst of their poverty.

The Caribbean: paradise of beautiful beaches and radiant sun; lands of romance and passion. These are some of the images depicted of the Caribbean. But the Caribbean is much more than beaches, white sand, passion, and romance. It is also a center of interesting religious dynamics, some of which derive from the Afro-caribbean religions.

Unfortunately, the North-Atlantic Christian culture has considered these deep religious expressions to be evil, among the more primitive and demonic religious practices in the hemisphere. Much of this pejorative opinion is the result of ignorance and prejudice. Christians have justified their own ignorance with the claim that these religions are diabolic and sinister—that they practice a "black magic" (a pejorative term itself) related to the spirits of the dead.

This prejudice has a profound historical root. It depends on the memory that these religions are the religions of slaves—blacks who were uprooted from their homes in Africa and were forced to build a "new home" characterized not by family, clan life, and nature, but by exploitation, oppression, and, in many cases, death.

Another important element that has contributed to the misunderstanding of these religions is the fact that they are religions of the Caribbean. Many might ask, "Can any good come from the Caribbean?" Others think the Caribbean has only sun, beaches, and recreational centers for the rich. Others see the Caribbean as many of the colonists of the fifteenth century perceived it: as the means to wealth and power.

The academic world has shared many of the above failings. Theologians and historians—especially those dealing with missions—have depicted these religions as primitive and diabolic. The Christian church has persecuted those who practiced these religions. Landowners prohibited any practice related to them, since they were afraid of their influence in the propagation of revolts. This resulted in a secrecy oath on behalf of the believers.

Recently, some scholarly investigation has been done. Nevertheless, studies are scarce in relation to the historical scope of the religions. Most of the ethnographic investigations have been published and provide trustworthy and competent information. Anthropologists and social scientists struggle to describe and understand the constituents of the Afro-caribbean religions. However, historical and philosophical analyses are an intrinsic part of the agenda for the Afro-caribbean religions.

Mark George's article on hermeneutics, with its use of Derrida's philosophical tool, deconstruction, provides interesting insight to the emergence of Afro-caribbean religions. In this response we will attempt to see how deconstruction can help us to understand the process by which the black-slave community created this religious cosmo-vision. We also point out some of deconstruction's limitations for explaining other elements inherent in the religions of the black slaves.

A point of clarification is necessary at the outset. Afro-caribbean religions have a vast number of manifestations.[1] This paper deals

[1] Afro-caribbean religions have different manifestations. In Brazil, for example, one finds the *Camdomblé* tradition, the *Palo Baiomble,* as well as other syncretistic traditions based on these prior ones. In Cuba, Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico one can find the *Yoruba* tradition and the *Ñañigo* tradition with their own

with two traditions in the Caribbean, namely *Santería* and *Vodou.*[2] The majority of the devotees of these traditions are in Cuba, Puerto Rico, Haiti, and many urban centers in the United States. Santería and Vodou emerged in Cuba and Haiti, respectively.

BLACK SLAVES, EVANGELIZATION, AND THE AFRO-CARIBBEAN RELIGIONS

The indigenous community in the West Indies was rapidly exterminated through the cruel and unjust wars waged by the colonists against the Amerindians. The colonists exploited the Amerindians and brought diseases to which the Amerindians had no natural defense. The colonists rewarded those who rebelled with death sentences. Some Amerindians expressed their refusal to live in such bondage by committing suicide.

When the Spanish colonists came to the Indies, there were approximately 100,000 Amerindians. By 1570, the population was barely five hundred (Rivera Pagán 1990:289). Evidently, the Caribbean, as well as the rest of Latin America, had experienced a "demographic collapse" (Gutiérrez 1989:10). In fact, the indigenous community was totally eliminated in the West Indies.

New servile labor was needed to keep the mines productive and to maintain the agriculture plantations. Black slaves were brought from Africa to serve under the most oppressive and abusive labor conditions. Separated from their homelands, their families, clans,

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regional particularities. In Haiti one can find the *Vodou* tradition, which is also shared in some regions of Dominican Republic.

The Afro-caribbean religious traditions simply cannot be taken as a homogeneous tradition. On the contrary, there are great differentiations among the traditions with enough common elements to enable the classification of these traditions under the umbrella of Afro-caribbean religions. For example, Brazil's *Camdomblé,* Trinidad's *Shango,* and Cuba's and Puerto Rico's *Santería* all derive from the *Orichas* tradition.

For additional information regarding the different Afro-caribbean traditions and their defining parameters, see Jorge Gallardo and Pollak-Eltz. As we speak about the different trends in the Afro-caribbean religions, we also find different trends in the traditions (see Wippler).

[2] I have chosen to follow Karen McCarthy Brown's spelling of *vodou* because it is closer to the Ion word, *vodu* (spirit).

and immediate cultural settings, the black slaves lived under exploitation and the threat of death. They continuously struggled to regain their freedom, to keep their identity alive. The colonists took them away from their land, family, and some aspects of their culture, but their religious sentiments, their spiritual heritage, was something the colonists could never take away.

EVANGELIZATION OF THE BLACK SLAVES

The church was interested in evangelizing those "pagans" which had come from Africa to the islands of the Caribbean. As with the indigenous community, the evangelization of the black slaves was a paradox: the submission of the body for the salvation of the soul. In the words of Carlos Esteban Deive, "the evangelization of the African also sought its most passive submission and it was a resource used to justify the slave trade. . . . The body of the slave was chained so that in recompense his soul might be saved."[3]

In Cuba, the church established an interesting method of evangelization. They created the *cabildo,* a type of black club, which provided the sociological space for instructing the blacks in Christianity. However, the *cabildo* was also the setting in which the blacks would celebrate their own traditional festivities (from their own countries), thus maintaining their own religious identity. About the *cabildo* in Cuba, Joseph Murphy comments:

> The *cabildos* were societies of blacks, slave and free, organized by the church for the purpose of religious instruction and mutual aid. Each was made up of Afro-Cubans of the same *nación.* The church hoped that, by encouraging African ethnic organizations, it might find it easier to Christianize their members. As always, motives were mixed. By Christianizing Afro-Cubans, the church enforced the mores of a repressive society and controlled or channeled the creative life of Afro-

[3] "La evangelización del Africano persiguió también su más fácil sometimiento y fue un recurso utilizado para justificar la trata negra. . . . Se encadenó el cuerpo del esclavo para, en recompensa, ofrecerle un alma que salvar" (1980:377; my translation).

> Cubans into socially acceptable directions. Yet, by supporting the Christian status of Afro-Cubans, the church opened up legal opportunities and spiritual hopes that were seriously resented by the ruling caste. (1988:29)

These efforts to evangelize had an unexpected outcome: the creation of a new religion which had the power to maintain the African religious identity in the new Caribbean context with the symbols and expressions of the Christian faith. The religion that emerged out of this context is Santería, a name which bears its own origin.[4]

For Vodou the situation is different. First, Spain had lost Haiti to the control of the French in 1697. After this period, a large number of blacks were brought as slaves to work in the plantations. The church made efforts to evangelize the slaves, but the priests served primarily the white population. The evangelization of the slaves was considered a secondary priority. This resulted in the perpetuation of many elements of the culture of the slaves, including religious elements. Thus Vodou emerged with elements of the Christian faith while preserving various deep African religious expressions.

Vodou played an important role in the war of independence. The importance of Vodou and the struggle for emancipation is revealed in Boukman, a *houngan* (a Vodou priest) who initiated the rebellion for the liberation of the slaves. The rebellion began with a Vodou rite, the *Petro* ceremony, which inspired and sealed the rebellious alliance and began the pathway for freedom from colonial bondage and slavery (see Bisnauth 1989:170–171).

After the revolution, the leaders who gained power tried to eliminate the Vodou practices and ceremonies. On the other hand, Catholicism was freely practiced. Consequently, Vodou and Catholic religious experiences began a new period of interaction.

[4] In Santería, the Yoruba deities are juxtaposed with the Catholic saints. The deities are treated like the Catholic saints in disguise. But it is more than that. The "santo" (saint) is not the Catholic saint, but the Yoruban deity itself. For example, the Yoruba deity Changó is represented by Saint Barbara.

> The accommodation of Catholic elements into the cult must have begun in the period before 1790, although there was greater degree of accommodation after that date. After the revolution, the Haitian rulers Toussaint, Dessalines, and Christophe tried to suppress vodun. They imposed a ban on vodun ceremonies and were ruthless in their punishment of those people who were caught practicing vodun rituals. At the same time (1800–1815), Catholicism was practiced with freedom. This, no doubt, helped to determine the extent to which catholic elements were absorbed in the vodun cult. (Bisnauth 1989:171)

It is a fascinating irony that as the priests evangelized the black slaves to save their souls while killing their bodies, the blacks themselves resisted this deadly evangelization by holding on to their religious heritage, which was enriched by the symbols of the Christian Church. Indeed, it became a battle between the idols of Christianity (colonial evangelization) and the deities of the slaves.

AFRO-CARIBBEAN RELIGIONS AND SYNCRETISM

It is this context which enabled the emergence of Afro-caribbean religions, in particular Santería and Vodou. But what came of their interaction with Christianity and how did this interaction issue in the resulting religions?

Ethnographers and anthropologists have identified Catholic saints with the different deities in the African pantheon and have recognized the use of many traditional elements in Christian rituals. Few, however, have dealt with *how* these elements have interacted or have even explored the consequences of these processes.

For example, in Santería the Catholic saints are the representations of the *orishas,* the Santería deities. *Oggún,* the deity which symbolizes war and violence, is represented by Saint Peter. *Oshún,* the deity which symbolizes love and passion, is represented by Our Lady of Charity. This is also true for many of the *Iwas* or spirits in the Vodou religion. How did these identifications occur? Did the

deities keep their own African identity or did they suffer changes? If there were changes, what did they mean for the community?

Most theologians (and some historians) use the concept of syncretism to interpret these phenomena. However, in the Western Christian perspective the concept carries negative connotations. It also presupposes that the religion which has undergone syncretism is vulnerable and simple in relation to a dominant religion. It maintains an image of polarities: power over weakness, maturity over superficiality, structure over randomness, imperviousness over vulnerability. On the other hand, it is usually assumed that the penetration of "extraneous practices" into the Christian tradition hinders the essentials of the faith. In the Christian tradition syncretism has generally been regarded as heresy.

Thus, the use of syncretism in explaining the phenomena of the Afro-caribbean religions bears two consequences. First, it sustains the assumption that the Afro-caribbean religions are simplistic, animistic, nonstructured, naive religions. Second, it denies the validity of the dual participation of a believer in both the Afro-caribbean religions and some type of Christianity. This "side-by-side" or parallel religious system is called *double belonging* (Schreiter 1985:148).

If syncretism has only limited usefulness in explaining the emergence of Santería and Vodou, what are the alternatives? We propose that deconstruction as a postmodern philosophical tool may give us insight into the phenomena.

DECONSTRUCTION AND THE AFRO-CARIBBEAN RELIGIONS

As we mentioned above, evangelization provided the means for interaction between the African religions. Due to this interaction, some ritual elements and symbols of Christianity penetrated the African tradition. In the first stage there were changes in the people's understanding of their own deities. Their understanding of the religion with which they had come to the Caribbean began to change. Karen McCarthy Brown comments on these changes:

> Slaves in the New World reground the lens of their religion to allow it to focus in exquisite detail on the social arena, the most problematic one in their lives. The spirits they brought with them from Africa shifted and realigned in response to their needs. Some were forgotten; others were given a centrality they never had in their homeland. (1991:100)

The following illustration regarding one of the common deities of Santería and Vodou, *Oggún* or *Ogou,* respectively, provides an interesting example of this change in the religion itself:

> As a result of the shift, the cosmos became thoroughly socialized. Ancient African spirits submerged their connections to the natural world and elaborated their social messages. Ogou is a good example. This Yoruba spirit's association with ironsmithing and his role as the protector of the hunters and clearer of the forest paths are barely detectable in the Haitian Ogou. In Haiti, his connection to soldiering has come to define his character, because this is the role in which Haitian slaves and their descendants have needed him most. Few arenas of life are as problematic for Haitians as the military, and few Vodou spirits receive as much emphasis in contemporary urban Vodou as Ogou. (McCarthy Brown 1991:100)

In the Yoruba tradition, *Oggún* not only has a role with forests and ironsmithing, he is also the symbol of absolute justice. But in Santería, *Oggún* has taken a different but related meaning. Anthropologist González-Wippler comments:

> As a symbol of war, Oggún is much feared and respected in Santería. Some santeros say that he is the father of tragedy, a symbol of all the pain and horror caused by violence. The orisha is worshipped and propitiated so that he will protect his followers from the very things he represents. (1989:45)

In a similar way, many of the symbols and ritual elements of Christianity were given new but related meanings by the believers and followers of Santería and Vodou. An interesting example is the use of holy water in the practices of witchcraft or *brujería* in Santería. *Palo Monte* and *Palo Mayombe* are the names given to this type of magic used in Santería and represent two different sects. *Paleros* is the name used for the followers of the magic practice. In the *Palo Mayombe* sect, there is a "good" and a "bad" branch. One can distinguish the two as follows:

> This differentiation is made by the paleros because the "Christian" cauldron in which their secrets are kept is sprinkled with holy water and the "Jewish" one is not. To the practitioners of *Palo* who, like the santeros, are steeped in Catholic tradition, anyone or anything that is not baptized is evil and does not belong to God. Because the ceremony of baptism utilizes holy water for rejection of the devil, everything that is sprinkled with this liquid is considered by the *paleros* to be "baptized" and purified. Evil spirits are believed to be frightened away and "burned" by the touch of holy water. (González-Wippler 1989:238–239)

The use of Christian elements in the Afro-caribbean religions reveals the penetration of the Christian tradition. It also gives evidence to the changes that both the African and the Christian religions have undergone. The appeal to syncretism alone has been unable to explain these changes.

We have tried to explain that both the African and Christian religion underwent changes. These changes resulted in the emergence of what has been called Afro-caribbean religions. There was a change of meaning. Nevertheless, both African and Christian elements were preserved. The social circumstances to which the slave community was submitted determined a progressive *supplementation* of meaning. Syncretism can address only the *content* of meaning; it cannot give us insight into the process of change in meaning nor explain the multiplicity of meanings which are a characteristic of the *double belonging* phenomena.

In contrast to this, Derrida's philosophical tool, deconstruction, enables us to see the process of the change in meaning without requiring a change in the form in which the meaning is expressed. Mark George summarizes the concept:

> Derrida emphasizes that aspect of *différance* having to do with deferral when he speaks of supplementation. Because "meaning" is a constant flickering between absence and presence, meaning and nonmeaning, it must be supplemented. This supplementation adds to the meaning. It adds a surplus. It cumulates and accumulates presence. But the supplement also supplements. In adding, it replaces. The supplement is an adjunct which takes-the-place-of. It both brings a surplus and replaces. (1991:9)

The idea of a continuous supplementation of meaning is perhaps a more suitable philosophical concept for accurately explaining the process suffered by both the African and Christian religions. Deconstruction helps to explain the emergence of the old symbols with new meanings, old rituals with new constituents and a dialectic world view in which the practices of the past (African religions) and the symbols of the present (Christian symbols)—together with the oppressive social context—issued in paradigms of hope (Afro-caribbean religions) for a people who once lived in freedom but were taken to a land that offered exploitation and oppression.

AFRO-CARIBBEAN RELIGIONS: CULTURAL RESISTANCE AGAINST THE OPPRESSOR

In the Caribbean as well as in the Latin American context, religion and politics have always been closely related. Nevertheless, prejudice against the Afro-Caribbean religions (and Latin American Christianity in general), has kept Christians from appreciating the enormous political and cultural contribution of these religions in terms of their resistance against oppression and the eradication of the Caribbean identity. As we have seen earlier, these religious

expressions reveal the suffering and hardships of a community which has been deprived of freedom and justice.

On the other hand, Afro-caribbean religions have developed meanings which are intrinsically related to the sufferings of daily life, to the uncertainty of life as slaves in a strange land, and to the mysteries of living under these conditions. They have not only provided people with faith against fate, but with inspiration, guidance, and strength to struggle for their liberation. Elizabeth Abbott comments on the importance of Vodou in the struggle for independence:

> It [Vodou] also provided hope and blind belief in gods so powerful that even bullets could not touch those they protected. And it provided secret recipes, and magic potions, and chants and incantations to ward off evil or to invoke it. And it reminded slaves how to make poison, old West Africa's way of testing truth, and executing too. And voudou produced leaders, for who better to command their fellow slaves than men and women intimate with the gods? (Abbott 1988:12)

This is most revealing indeed! Afro-caribbean religions put aside the dualistic world view promulgated by colonial Christianity with its distinction between "worldly" and "spiritual" life. Life is one, and it is an image of suffering. This suffering was (and still is in many cases) the historical foundation that enabled the continuous supplementation of the deities and symbols of the Afro-caribbean religions. The daily struggles of the slave community—their political, economic, and social conditions—gave new contours to the religions.

So far, they have kept the issues of daily life central to the faith and to their dealings with the deities. It is a wisdom that begins with the most basic and simple circumstances of daily life. They are religions of *cotidianidad,* a daily life bursting under the weight of oppression from the masters and the dominant society in general. With their daily lives still bursting under oppression, their religions provide the means for continuous change. The uncon-

scious objective propelling these religions is the survival of the people.

This is one of the limitations of *deconstruction.* It usually fails to provide an understanding of the political struggles and strategies of a community. It does not reflect on the character of the political resistance taken by those who live under oppression. Deconstruction provides the means for identifying a community's world view, its understandings of reality, and the meaning of its religious practices. It may thus provide a voice among the many other voices in society. But it may also be just one more voice among others, with no particular claim, although it is a voice that cries for liberation.

This is precisely the danger postmodern cultural elements entail for the Third World. They discreetly justify the economic and political proposal of the "end of history"[5] (i.e., the elimination of any fundamental truth or claim of truth in history). This approach substitutes the calculated capitalist free market for the human struggle for the ideal world. It eradicates ideology and the contention created by it against the oppressors. All of the above has been carried out by the "proved liberal democratic" governments that have characterized the dictatorial and oligarchical powers in the Third World. Fukuyama depicts what this post-historical world will be like:

> The end of history will be a very sad time. The struggle for recognition, the will to risk our life for an abstract goal, the world ideological struggle which evidences bravery, courage, imagination and idealism will be replaced by economical calculations (the eternal solution to technical problems), preoccupation with the world environment, and the satisfaction of the refined demands of the consumers. In the post-historical

[5] For more information concerning politics and economics in post-modernity, see Fukuyama. For a more philosophical treatment, see Lyotard. For an interpretation of the consequences of "the end of history" for the Third World, see Helio Gallardo.

> period there will be no art or philosophy, just the permanent vigilance of the museum of human history.[6]

Since deconstruction is built on Nietzsche's philosophical framework (see Norris 1982) and his proposal of anti-rational positions, we must suspect the political consequences of its use as a cultural and philosophical tool. It is obvious that deconstruction attempts to eliminate any universal ethic, any material and universal interpretation of history. This attempt is a most important element of the postmodern philosophical approach (already apparent in Nietzsche). Deconstruction proposes an interpretation of "histories." It will allow no one interpretation of history to claim validity over the rest. Instead, the convergence of "histories" provides a pluralism that ignores the oppressive character of the convergence of those "histories." The logical result of this cultural-philosophical approach is the eradication of any universal ethic or rational ideology that makes a universal claim, that questions oppressive regimes, or that acknowledges the resistance character and true claim of liberation.

> In effect, the universal ethic is that ethic that belongs primarily to the poor. The powerful do not need it, but the poor do. The universal ethic holds implicitly what liberation theologians have called the preferential option for the poor. Being universal, and precisely because it is universal, it has a particular preference for the poor. When this is acknowledged, its anti-rationalist ideology emerges, an ideology which is *necessarily* anti-rationalist.[7]

[6] "El fin de la historia será un tiempo muy triste. La lucha por el reconocimiento, la voluntad de arriesgar la vida de uno por un fin abstracto, la lucha ideológica mundial que pone de manifiesto bravura, coraje, imaginación e idealismo, serán reemplazados por cálculos económicos, la eterna solución de problemas técnicos, las preocupaciones acerca del medio ambiente y la satisfacción de las demandas refinadas de los consumidores. En el periodo post-histórico no habrá arte o filosofia, simplemente la perpetua vigilancia del museo de la historia humana" (Fukuyama 1989:12; my translation).

[7] Efectivamente, la ética universal es la ética de los débiles por excelencia. Los

Deconstruction attempts to eliminate the *utopian horizon of liberation.* All utopian thought is sustained by a universal ethic, a rational approach to the understanding of truth. On the other hand, the Nietzchean heritage depicted in Derrida's deconstruction results in a convergence of many histories, an array of alternatives for interpretation. It provides perfect justification for the state to uphold "political order," a justification which has been used in the Latin American context with increasing intensity since the 1960s. Deconstruction provides the perfect legitimization for the continuation of the repressive governments in the Third World.

For example, George's article contains no references to the situation of the women in Jesus' time. George easily avoids dealing with the oppressive reality experienced by the women; they are not part of the hermeneutical project. Even if they were, theirs would just be another "history" among other "histories." Deconstruction, like syncretism (which does say nothing about the political character of the Afro-caribbean religions), battles to become an hermeneutical or philosophical tool for the postmodern society. Such a tool is sympathetic to those who profess plurality, but in fact it is just another "modern" idol which seeks adoration. Consequently, it does not serve the purpose of the liberation of the poor and oppressed.

Deconstruction celebrates plurality. There is no doubt about it. But this very plurality, with its specific heritage of philosophical thought, usually ignores the political consequences of a religious practice. Any hermeneutical or philosophical tool should consider the political character of the religious expressions of the poor. Only in this way can the investigator find the full meaning in the religion and witness the struggle for life.

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poderosos no la necesitan, sin embargo, los débiles sí. Por ello la ética universalista lleva como necesidad implícita a lo que los teólogos de la liberación llaman hoy la opción preferencial por los pobres. Siendo universal, y precisamente por el hecho de serlo, tiene un efecto particular en favor de los débiles. Por lo tanto, al salir a la luz este hecho aparece la ideología anti-racionalista, que es necesariamente anti-universalista (Hinkelammert 1991:95; my translation).

As future theologians, historians, missiologists, and pastors, we need the ecumenical insight to accept plurality, but we must not ignore the political struggles of the poor and the need for a change in the character of power. We need to understand the history that seeks for justice and peace for all humanity. We need an ecumenical approach that will accept the validity of the religious experience of others, especially when it has sustained life, including those we have always understood as diabolical. In short, we need an approach in which the different gods of the people—gods that for centuries have been the source of life—can make an alliance for freedom, justice, and peace. This is the hope all Christians have in the coming reign of God.

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From Text to Context and Beyond: Ethical Implications

REINHILDE RUPRECHT

The three key terms of the title—text, context, and beyond—suggest both the three parts of this response and, at the same time, the three functions of my contribution to this forum. First, I will briefly highlight some aspects of the article, "Mark 10:1-12: Text of Divorce or Text of Interpretations?" (George 1992), pointing out especially how the approach presented in the article may lead away from the text, or at least from its centrality. Then I will attempt to show how Christian ethics is troubled by the same hermeneutical concern which challenges the logocentrism criticized by Mark George and the authors he uses. I will also discuss briefly the developments within Christian ethics that lead to emphasizing context; namely, Christian realism and liberation ethics. The third and final part of the response—"and beyond"—actually starts with this, since the messianic hope guiding liberation ethicists points to the doctrine of eschatology. Here the article will ask about the possibility of eschatology in the face of an ongoing chain of interpretation. Is there room for the reign of God and for messianic hope in an "endless chain of supplementation" (George 1992:19; similarly 5, 16f)?

1. "FROM TEXT"

Mark George's article presents a thorough application of Derrida's methodology of deconstruction and is especially strong in pointing out that language and "text" are solely products of human

endeavor. George appropriately challenges the logocentrism to which Western philosophy subscribes and which guides much biblical and theological research.

The following criticism has to be brief because of the limitations of time and space within this forum. These constraints probably led to the article's brevity regarding Derrida's relation to more traditional hermeneutical approaches, such as those of Hans Georg Gadamer and Jürgen Habermas.

In the beginning of his article, George (1992:4) offers two references to Gadamer which describe the interaction between text and interpreter or reader in the hermeneutical process. Nevertheless, he has conveniently chosen a rather basic statement, which fails to reveal the complexity in Gadamer's thought. His discussion of what the 1989 translators of *Truth and Method* now call "historically effected consciousness" (1989:xv), *wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein,* is rightly considered to be one of Gadamer's landmark contributions to the history of philosophy. The study of the history of effects, "which includes the history of research" (Gadamer 1989:300), seems on first sight to be the ground on which George reconstructs the chain of supplementation (1992:5–10). Before explaining what I believe to be the difference between Gadamer's and George's approaches, however, let me turn to another author of classical hermeneutics.

Jürgen Habermas' *Knowledge and Human Interest* (1976) emphasizes that interest connects theories and social practice in two ways: as the conditions of the possible objectivity of knowledge, and as a result of the development of humanity throughout history (Zimmerli 1981:235). In one of the elaborations on his famous theme "communicative competence," Habermas pointedly contrasts the concerns of hermeneutics to those of linguistics.

> Linguistics does not concern itself with communicative competence. . . . The concept of a language system, in which language is understood as *langue,* leaves out of account the pragmatic dimension in which *langue* is transformed into *parole.* Hermeneutics, by contrast,

> concerns itself with the experiences of the speaker in this dimension. (1989:297f)

The deconstruction offered in this article on Mark 10 by George (1992) seems to remain largely within the realm of linguistics as defined in 1971 (German edition) by Habermas. Jesus' communicative competence in the interaction with the Pharisees serves only to establish another link in the chain of supplementation which reaches from Moses[1] to the authors of the Gospels of Mark and Matthew, to the reformer John Calvin, and finally to New Testament exegetes of the last 20 years (George 1992:6–10).

Gadamer's concern for "being affected by history" (i.e., for fostering an awareness of the situation or "pre-text"; cf. 1989:301) and Habermas' emphasis on communicative competence as praxis are two critical concepts. In its lack of historical and social analysis, George's random string of interpreters, which jumps from Calvin to late 20th century exegetes, seems to be more or less a colorful étude. The selection of the divorce passage itself seems somewhat random. It is a fairly safe pericope to deconstruct, since not many in the contemporary Western world adhere to its literal sense anymore. What would happen if one were to apply the conclusions of this paper to a text more at the core of Christian faith, such as the passion narrative, the sermon on the mount, or the resurrection accounts?

If George had chosen a more famous biblical text, such as the decalogue, this issue of *Koinonia Journal* would have contained four-color reproductions of medieval stained glass windows, the two tables of the law in surprising places in Marc Chagall's art, and possibly a 1960s-style Sunday school illustration of a sheepishly smiling Moses. An enclosed tape would have featured a couple of

[1] The uncritical use of the name "Moses" on p. 9 (footnote 9 seems half-hearted) is a puzzling but catchy example of the true post-modernity of Mark George's article, which is concerned only with the deconstruction of a text in which "Moses" is used in a similar uncritical fashion. A "modern" interpreter, guided by the principles of enlightenment and historical-critical exegesis, would have referred to "the Pentateuch tradition" or to the "Mosaic law," acknowledging that the author of the Gospel of Mark may not have the same historical consciousness as this "modern" interpreter.

motets, and readers would meditate about the liturgical practice still alive in Switzerland where the ten commandments are read for self-examination in every communion service. There probably would be excerpts from the dramas and novels of world literature and, finally, the inevitable references in political speeches of all historical periods.

An impressive chain of interpretations, indeed. But without social and cultural analysis of the respective "pre-texts," the entire issue would be just a colorful exercise of the educated intellectual, a celebration of the achievements of the narrow connections between Judeo-Christian religions and Western culture.

2. "TO CONTEXT"

It should be clear by this point that this response focuses on the methodological concerns of George's article. The brevity of George's exegesis of the actual divorce passage gives me the freedom to concentrate on methodology and hermeneutics. Because of the focus of George's article, I will not offer an ethics of divorce, although one could certainly say much on that topic.

2.1. LOGOCENTRISM IN THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS

Thomas Aquinas' work is an excellent example of logocentrism. In his Treatise on Virtues (*Summa* I–II Q LVI, a 4), he discusses the question, "Are irascible and concupiscible powers subject to virtue?" This question is one of the bases for a discussion of concerns raised in the passage on divorce. In this article we find one reference to Paul (Rom 7:28), another to Augustine, and five to "the philosopher"—Aristotle (a 4). Aquinas presents a classical example of how natural law is viewed as the basis for moral decisions. We find similar proportions of biblical, philosophical, and historical references in *Summa* II–II, where Aquinas discusses "lechery" and human sexuality, although he replaces references to the church fathers by Old Testament quotations. It should be noted that in all appeals to the eternal principles of natural law, not even Thomas Aquinas can get around the consideration of

context: In II–I Q CLIV a 4, he argues that "kisses, embraces, and caresses are not mortal sins in themselves"; they might simply be "the custom of the county."[2] But they are mortal sins when they lead to adultery.

It is easy to dismiss Aquinas as an historical author who shows the epistemological limits of his own time, even when one takes his "effective history" into account. Thomism is limited largely to the Roman Catholic tradition of moral theology based on natural law. But Protestant ethics may have exercised precisely the same logocentrism. Protestants may simply have replaced natural law with "scripture" and (at least for those denominations with roots in the Reformation) "confessions." If so, they have adopted a new "text," however noble the motives. This is a radical thesis, but for the sake of space and time, it shall have to stand as it is.

2.2. SOME ASPECTS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF CONTEXTUAL AND LIBERATION ETHICS

Models of ethics as sketched above subscribe to the same logocentrism which George's article is criticizing so eloquently. The discipline has also found them to be unsatisfactory. An ethics which tries to find the proper norm or "text" for an ethical situation, and then "applies" it, fails to consider the ambiguity of our human nature. Human decisions create new problems (Kammer 1988:121). Such an ethic fails to recognize that we consistently have to make ironic and tragic decisions. This ambiguity exists because of the complexity of history and humanity.

Contextual ethics in the broadest sense tries to take fully into account the situation of the ethical problem; i.e., the context. Habermas's model of communicative action and competence has been found helpful for describing such processes (for an example, see Welch 1990:129–136). Sharon Welch quotes Habermas as saying that "logocentrism means neglecting the complexity of reason effectively operating in the life-world" (1990:130). In this view,

[2] The quotations here are from Paul Sigmund's translation, 1988:79.

ethics is a human endeavor. It starts with a critical analysis of the historical, social, and cultural context.

Although George refers once to the con-textual nature of texts (1992:15), critical social and historical analysis is notably absent. I am especially bothered by the lack of reference to one particular realm of human life which has been greatly "affected" (see above, p. 46) by this "text"; namely, the experience of women. Such a reference appears neither in the exegesis of the Gospel passage nor in the chain of supplementation. The article doesn't even offer a contextual New Testament interpretation. Stanley Saunders' *Contextual Readings of the Controversy Stories in Matthew* (1990:296–322) is a fine example for a contextual reading of the parallel in Matthew:

> The task of granting the story a fair hearing on its own terms demands that one suspend initially the presupposition that is virtually common to all studies of Matthew 19:9, i.e., that Matthew here presents in story form a piece of early Christian case law. The suspension of one presupposition is balanced by the adoption of another: This story is a functioning element within the larger context of Matthew's gospel, which is concerned primarily with the description of the character of Jesus and his kingdom and with the presentation of the developing conflict between Jesus and the leaders of the Jewish people, a conflict that will lead to his death. (1990:306)

Although the "contextual" challenge of logocentrism in Christian ethics may go back as far as Aquinas, the first discussion of theory of an "ethics of situation" is attributed to Max Weber. In many ways, Christian realism paved the way for the contextual ethics of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Paul Lehmann and for liberation ethics. This strain of Christian ethics was prevalent roughly from World War I to the 1960s. One of its characteristics is that it recognizes the limits of liberalism and acknowledges that the negative and evil in history cannot be fully overcome within history.

The civil rights movement provides a good example of Christian realist ethics. The appeal of the minority to the big "text" (equality guaranteed in the constitution; i.e., logocentrism) played a role, especially in demonstrations and supreme court decisions. Nevertheless, this was not the most ethically critical dimension of the movement. The smaller components of action, which lived at the heart of civil rights activism, were characteristic of an ethics of Christian realism: outreach, community programs, voter registration, and later, desegregation and affirmative action. The question is whether this really helped foster a shift of power and wealth.

Liberation theories, including liberation ethics, mark a shift from concern for the other to concern for the self. The oppressed and marginalized are no longer asked to love their masters and oppressors. The survivors of child and spouse abuse are no longer asked to "forgive" unconditionally. Women, people of color, and citizens of so-called third world countries have been asked to love themselves and to acknowledge their own value.

Christian realism's "effective history" tends to justify conservative and puritan sexual and marital ethics (i.e., anti-divorce ethics!). This evolved most obviously in the neo-conservative strand of ethics which claims also to be the heir of contextualism and of realism. A messianic vision needs to complement any analysis of the context. This enables one to shift the emphasis on the sinful human nature toward a fuller appreciation of human possibilities.

The connection between eschatological hope and ethical action can be shown in many parts of the history of Christianity—from the social involvement of New Testament communities awaiting the *parousia* to millenarian sects of different times. But liberation theology has brought this connection fully to the conscience of the Western establishment of ethics. Juan Luis Segundo writes, "Grace raises human beings . . . and provides them with the means they need to achieve their true destiny within one and the same historical process" (1976:3). The same God who transcends history works in history.

George argues clearly that an overemphasis on sacred texts has kept our attention from the fact that the different disciplines of theological study—including and especially ethics—are human endeavors. My response so far has supported this claim. At this point, however, it seems appropriate to raise the question of whether an endless chain of interpretation has room for a God who transcends history. Is there a messianic hope which sustains and empowers us? Each member in the various chains of supplementation represents a new situation. The interpretation signals how power has shifted away from the previous member. But this is usually a random shift, not the messianic "breaking of class barriers and race and gender hierarchies" (Welch 1990:131).

Postmodern authors often criticize modernity's concern for history. Thus, it may not be fair to argue mainly from within modern methodologies that emphasize history. Liberation theologians and ethicists may or may not understand themselves as post-modern. Some of them, as the article by Carlos Cardoza Orlandi points out, actually work in a premodern context. But they strongly remind us that eschatology is an element we have not traditionally emphasized enough. At best, eschatological hope was an element of individual faith and salvation. In the following statement, José Míguel Bonino argues strongly *against* such individualism, *for* the connection between eschatological hope and political praxis, and *for* a belief in a God who acts in history and transcends it at the same time.

> The appeal to eschatological hope and the use of its symbols is frequently related to ethical questions—specific forms of action or resistance. But we cannot deny that in the history of Christianity the eschatological symbols have been so cut off from the world, so individualized, and so exclusively related to God's power conceived as the negation of human participation that they have led to resignation and historical cynicism. (1983:93f)

Does deconstruction, as applied to a part of the Christian tradition, do just this? Does it lead to resignation and historical cynicism? Or is there room for hope?

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Deconstruction and the Destruction of Meaning

CRAIG D. ATWOOD

INTRODUCTION

The thesis presented by Mr. George is of concern to historians because we interpret texts and because many aspects of George's theory resonate with historical method. Historians gave up long ago the quest for ultimate meaning and unchanging truth. Instead we view texts primarily as human records and use them as windows into the past, not as icons of meaning. The very nature of the discipline requires that historians adopt a theoretical relativism which avoids projecting modern assumptions and judgments on the text in question.

The study of the past reveals that all knowledge and attitudes are timebound—subject to the continual process of historical flux. The ambiguity and complexity of human communication is an historical fact which makes historians increasingly humble in their claims for certainty and full understanding. Since historians participate in this human reality and are timebound themselves, it is nearly impossible to achieve objectivity. However, that remains the goal. Because the perspective of the reader affects interpretation, historical documents must be analyzed from a variety of perspectives in order to mine their information about dead societies. This effort is made in confidence that every human record reveals *something* outside the text, namely, something about the author and his or her setting.

Despite real affinities between historical and deconstructive methodologies, it is on this last point that the historian diverges from the literary critic. The radical subjectivity—one could almost say solipsism—of deconstruction makes the historical task impossible. According to George, language cannot communicate meaning ("full presence") because there is always ambiguity. All efforts to make a one-to-one correspondence between words and things (or events) are doomed to failure. Without such correspondence, linguistic formulations participate in an endless series of interpretations, none of which approaches meaning. In other words, a linguistic event has no external referent. There is only the text and the interpreter and each interpretation becomes the text for the next interpreter. George presents this theory as a radical challenge to traditional methodologies, such as the historical-critical, but the implications of the theory are more radical than George admits.

MONTAIGNE AND DECONSTRUCTION

In the sixteenth century, the French writer and philosopher Michel de Montaigne produced an essay ostensibly in defense of the rationalist theologian, Raymond Sebond. At one point in the apology Montaigne employs a fencing trick, a tactic of last resort, whereby he will disarm his opponent. However, in disarming his opponent, he must also disarm himself (Montaigne:63). Montaigne then proceeds to give one of the more devastating critiques of human reason ever written. Montaigne "defends" Sebond by reducing both Sebond and his adversaries to an equal level of absurdity. There is no certainty in reason or truth in the world. Therefore, it is ultimately useless to debate such issues. Each person must make a choice based on faith in authority or embrace an honest and complete skepticism. For Montaigne there is no middle ground, even for his own writings.

Although Montaigne is dealing primarily with epistemology, there is a similarity between his *Defense of Raymond Sebond* and George's article. George uses a radical hermeneutic which allows voices on the margins to be heard. Like that of Montaigne,

George's theory disarms himself as well as his opponents. However, in one crucial aspect, George is unlike Montaigne. Montaigne was conscious of the damage he was inflicting and self-critical in his analysis, while the author of this article appears to be neither self-aware nor self-critical in his appropriation of deconstructive theory.

The focus of my critique is on whether this article uses the theory of language presented with integrity and clearly presents the implications of this theory. Specifically I will look at George's failure to critique his authority, his inability to provide a hermeneutic which allows for meaningful discussion of his own writing, and his claim that deconstruction is a beneficial theory.

CRITICISM OF AUTHORITIES

One implication of George's theory is that deconstruction destroys all authority in the realm of interpretation. No one—not even God—can end the play of language, the endless process of supplementation and replacement which continually separates the interpreter from the original speech event (George 1992:6). All linguistic formulations share in the limitations of language, making authoritative statements impossible without an improper exercise of power.

In light of this radical rejection of authority, it is curious that George has accepted Derrida as an authority. Problematic points in the theory, such as the complicated relationship of symbols to things, are settled by an uncritical appeal to Derrida. Alternative theories, such as those of Gadamer and Ricoeur, are summarily rejected with little or no analysis and critique, while the linguistic theories of Derrida are presented as unassailable certainties. There is no indication that George has critiqued his authority or examined the criticisms others have raised. For instance, the author does not seem to be concerned with Derrida's questionable assumption that writing is essentially the same as speaking or that we become conscious only through language. Although few psychologists or philosophers would divorce language and consciousness, neither would they equate the two. It is a common

human experience to be unable to articulate what one feels, and feeling is a form of consciousness. The mystic is a person intensely conscious of the ineffable.

Furthermore, George is not bothered by the assumption that all forms of discourse are to be treated equally. Is there really no difference between discourse which intends to communicate an event and that which seeks to proscribe behavior? In his novel, *Foucault's Pendulum,* Umberto Eco demonstrates that it makes a great difference whether the text one is studying is a grocery list or an occult prophecy. George's uncritical acceptance of Derrida as an authority is disturbing in a scholarly effort—particularly so in this presentation, since it seems to contradict the author's own theory of interpretation. Why is Derrida exempt from the endless play of interpretation? George does acknowledge Derrida's resistance to "all attempts to define deconstruction precisely" (George 1992; see footnote 14); however, George does not follow up the implications of this. It would appear that Derrida himself is aware that he is trapped in the play of language and that no one can elicit his meaning, yet this article confidently proceeds to do so. How does George apply his hermeneutic to Derrida himself?

This lack of self-criticism shows itself further in George's failure to present weaknesses or ambiguities in his own theory. He speaks confidently as an authority, as an expert himself. However, there are indeed ambiguities, some of which may be intentional. For instance, George admits that Schleiermacher, Ricoeur, and Gadamer mean different things by their claim to bring out "the meaning of the text," but he dismisses these differences as being ultimately swallowed up in the ambiguity of language (George, 1992:5). This may be true, but it is not clearly shown in the article. The author does not examine carefully what each thinker claims meaning itself to be. It is not clear in this presentation just what the difference is between Ricoeur's "meaning" and Derrida's "interpretation." They sound very similar, but Ricoeur would find existential import in the process of interpretation and would not deny the "givenness" or objectivity of the text. More to the point, the author has failed to explain what he himself means by mean-

ing and interpretation. The equation of "full presence" with meaning is not helpful without more analysis. This ambiguity allows the author to control his own reader's understanding of what meaning is, but is ultimately fatal, since his entire argument is based on the concept of "full presence." As it stands, the reader must either accept or reject the article's assumptions without the opportunity to assess those assumptions critically.

IS THERE A JUSTIFICATION FOR WRITING?

George has left one critical question unasked. How is his theory of interpretation to be applied to his own writing? Not only is there no help for the reader to answer the question; it appears the author has not even asked it of himself. The closest he comes is the statement that "this is only my interpretation"; a truism which does nothing to advance discussion or understanding. Related to this is the author's failure to offer a justification for his writing and our responding. In other words, his hermeneutic fails to deal with his own participation in the play of language.

Derrida himself has claimed that deconstruction is parasitic in that it needs another text on which to feed (Guerrière 1990:215). Unfortunately, this leaves the theory to feed upon itself. Can a parasitic theory be the basis for communication? The parasitical nature of deconstruction is the biggest challenge to its own validity. If it impossible for me to grasp in any way the intention of the author or to understand his meaning, why does George write and why do I interpret? Is it because we "delight in the play of language" and simply create words for the sheer enjoyment of creating and ordering them? I question whether George truly accepts that. This article has every appearance of being an elegantly crafted and beautifully expressed argument intending to convince the reader of something. I dare say George would claim that in places I have misunderstood his meaning or purpose, but his theory of language does not allow for such debate over his meaning. It is useless for me to ask for clarification because the more he attempts to clarify, the farther we move from "full presence." I as a commentator and he as a writer are equally

doomed to flicker between absence and presence without any way to communicate meaning or even debate meaning with one another. So why make the effort? What in this theory of language allows any author or speaker to articulate thoughts and seek to convince others? A theory of interpretation is valid only if it can be applied consistently to the interpreter as well as to the text being interpreted. How are we to deconstruct this work?

THE PLURALITY OF MEANINGS, GOD, AND THE MARGINS

Near the end of the article the author presents some of the benefits of deconstruction. "Deconstructive interpretations . . . break the grip which established methodologies maintain on the text. . . . Deconstruction . . . allows interpretations to be heard which have been banished to the margins by the prevailing methodologies" (George 1992:15). In other words, deconstruction allows the voices at the margins to be heard. Deconstruction also reminds us not to idolize God in language. These are laudable goals, but the means to achieve them are problematic and ultimately self-destructive.

Traditional methodologies approach texts either like an oyster which must be pried open in the hope of finding a pearl of meaning, or like a silver statue which must be stripped of its tarnish in order to be seen in its true luster. According to this article, these naive approaches must be replaced with a method which views the text as an onion which one must peel and peel until there is nothing. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that we reverse that process. The text is a nothing around which we add layers of interpretation. Either way no meaning exists either outside the text or within the text. There is only an endless process of supplementation and interpretation. As this article puts it, no interpretation can have priority over another. "All interpretations are welcome" at the table of deconstruction (George, 1992:18). This is another way of saying that every interpretation is equally valid. Thus there is no way to determine whether an interpretation should be rejected as a false reading of the text. The reasonable and the absurd are both welcomed.

George claims that this allows for a multiplicity of meanings and interpretations, but in fact it asserts that no text has meaning. All interpretations are equally valid because all are equally meaningless. Everything is reduced to an undifferentiated morass of interpretation. There is no room even for a relative meaning, since every interpretation replaces what it interprets. George points to midrash as an example of the benefits of multiple meanings. However, the method of midrash is diametrically opposed to that outlined here. In midrash there are various interpretations because the text is full of meaning and its meaning is of existential importance. Midrash is predicated upon the belief that language was created by God and reveals the mind of God. The language of scripture may be ambiguous, but only because scripture refers to the infinite, which cannot be bound the finite. Each layer of interpretation adds to our understanding of God without replacing what has been said before. God is in truth the referent for all language, even though no language can contain God. George rejects this view of language. There is no way to go beyond the text to its referent. It is a symbol which replaces that to which it claims to be pointing. In this theory there is an infinity of interpretation because the text is devoid of meaning.

This applies to language about God as well. George argues that deconstruction teaches that God cannot and should not be circumscribed in language. At best, deconstruction merely reminds us of this truth, which has been expressed in most religions and philosophies.

There is a surface similarity between George's God under erasure and the apophatic theology of Pseudo-Dionysius. The mystical tradition of Pseudo-Dionysius holds that we speak more truthfully when we say what God is not than when we say what God is. Language is imperfect and incapable of expressing the divine reality (Lossky 1976). Thomas Aquinas also expresses this idea when he asserts that the only possible way of speaking about God is by analogy. It is dangerous to believe that our statements about God express the essence of God (Aquinas 1969:1a, 13). However, George's theory states that we become conscious *only* through

language. We know God only through language, yet language cannot communicate God. Therefore, *we cannot be conscious of God.* God's presence is irrelevant. This is the opposite of the *via negativa* exemplified in the anonymous work, *The Cloud of Unknowing.* According to the latter, we become more conscious of God as we relinquish language and ultimately reason itself (Johnson 1973). If George's theory is true, it destroys religion at its core.

Finally we come to the question of the voices at the margins. George argues eloquently for the benefits deconstruction gives to the marginalized. By not judging the validity of any interpretation of a text, deconstruction allows all voices to be heard. George's theory does indeed allow for the voices at the margins to be heard, but it does so by reducing all voices to an equal level of absurdity. The margins can be heard because they are no closer to meaning or worth than the center. They can be heard only as instances of the play of language within the babble of interpretation. What they say has no validity or power. Their challenge to the center can be deconstructed and dismissed. They can be heard, but they do not need to be heeded. This is the abyss to which the theory leads, and it can be avoided by the practitioners of deconstruction only by special pleading or an exercise of power.

CONCLUSION

It has not been my intention to judge whether the theory presented is a true representation of the ambiguity of language and the limitations of interpretation. The question of language, truth, and meaning is an ancient one which lies at the very heart of philosophy and religion. How can language communicate truth? Is there any way to escape the ambiguity of language?

I do not presume to offer answers at this time, although I am inclined to accept traditional theories which see a continuum of meaning possible within the constraints of the text. At present, I am satisfied with partial meaning and with caution in proclaiming final answers. My concern here is with the theory that has been outlined in George's article. Those who promote and utilize the theory of deconstruction ought to be consistent. They should

embrace fully the radical implications of the theory. This radicalness goes beyond a mere rejection of traditional methods and authorities. It goes beyond a challenge to the powers that be. It goes beyond a concern for justice and human happiness. It goes so far beyond, in fact, that it offers scant hope to those on the margins and the oppressed.

If this theory is correct, it not only destroys the scholarly enterprise in which we are engaged, it also destroys the possibility of any human communication. The theory may be correct, but how would we ever know? Just as Montaigne's skepticism rendered his own thought vain, so does deconstruction ultimately consume itself. The difference between Montaigne and George, as I see it, is that Montaigne was self-conscious and consistent in applying his destructive theories and George is not.

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The Divorce of Text and Meaning

SUSAN J. DUNLAP

Mark George demonstrates how a French school of literary criticism might be appropriated for biblical hermeneutics. Before our very eyes he deconstructs a biblical text.

This deconstruction of a biblical text makes three important contributions to biblical hermeneutics. First, deconstruction calls attention to the impact of the social location of the interpreter on the construction of the meaning of the text. Second, deconstruction continually calls us to repent of textual idolatry. To place God "under erasure" is consistent with several strands of our tradition: the Hebrew reluctance to speak the name of God, certain forms of mysticism (flickering absence and presence), and Protestant iconoclasm. Third, deconstruction makes room for interpretations by voices that historically have been silenced.

To rend the text from a timeless, changeless "True Meaning" clearly performs a service to the enterprise of interpreting the Bible. However, deconstruction does not necessarily rend the bond between the text and social practices. George asks, "If we deconstruct a text (or texts), ~~with what are we left?~~" I would answer, "We are left with the history of its effects." I want to enlarge the field of inquiry for biblical hermeneutics beyond text, interpreter, and meaning to include social effects. We cannot speak of the meaning of a text without taking into account the history of its effects. For example, to speak of the meaning of Marx, we must remember the Gulag; to speak of the meaning of Christianity, the Inquisition. We cannot talk about the meaning of

Aristotle apart from slavery and the subjugation of women. Literary sleights of hand can dismiss these effects too quickly.

George says the text considered here does not support the claim that it is about divorce. Rather, interpreters have approached the text with that decision already made. In an act of will to power over the text, they have imposed that predetermined meaning on the text. While I would agree with that assessment, I would push it further and ask about the historical effects of this will to power. How has that act of will to power played out in history? Historically, this will to power has made this text very much about divorce. No amount of hermeneutical tinkering can undo the fact that this text has historically reinforced prohibitions against divorce. These historical effects are part of what is at stake in any act of interpretation. Deconstruction can demonstrate an endless chain of supplementation and history can demonstrate that some have had the power to declare, "The supplementation stops here: this text means that divorce is prohibited."

What have been the effects of this text on women? Historically, marriage has not been a safe place for all women. For example, at one time in England the law was that a man could beat his wife with a stick so long as its diameter was no larger than his thumb. This is the origin of the phrase, "rule of thumb." In this situation, prohibitions against divorce kept some women in situations of violence.

On the other hand, in some situations marriage has been the sole means of economic support for some women, the only alternatives being prostitution or asylums for the poor and mad. In this situation, the text protected some women from disaffected husbands' abandonment.

To say the text has nothing to do with divorce has two possible consequences. It could abdicate responsibility for how the text has reinforced patriarchal marriage. Or it could disrupt a form of economic protection for some women. Either way, denying that the text is about divorce denies its very real historical effects.

My claim that meaning cannot be divorced from effects depends on a certain view of texts. In this view, a text is not a

monad. It does not stand alone with discrete boundaries. It is tied to social practices. A text is the product of social practices and the creator of social practices. Life and language, text and community, are inextricably bound. Some speak of the social-symbolic order—the enmeshment of symbol systems, such as written texts, with the social order. Texts are bound within a matrix of social practices, institutions, power structures, legal practices, medical, business, church, family structures, and psyches. All of these elements interact to create, destroy, reinforce, and compete with each other.

The Bible is one of the texts caught up in this web. Will the Bible function to uphold oppressive social-symbolic orders or will it challenge them? Will it be interpreted, constructed, and supplemented in a way that subverts the "powers that be"? Will the Bible serve as a source of resistance? Or will it simply reinforce hegemonic power and be on the side of the victimizers?

A common vulnerability for those of us who work with sacred texts is to succumb to what Richard Bernstein has called "Cartesian anxiety" (Bernstein 1983:16). This anxiety arises out of an either/or orientation. Either there is a "True Meaning," a bedrock foundation, a diamond of meaning embedded in the text, or there is no meaning at all. Either we claim unchanging absolutes, or we are subject to rampant relativism, chaos, and nihilistic dread.

I join with others who claim that these are not the only two alternatives. It is still possible to claim that some interpretations are better than others. Deconstruction does not rule out the possibility of articulating reasons to defend one interpretation over another. Rather, deconstruction clarifies that the text alone cannot adjudicate between better and worse interpretations. We cannot say one interpretation is better than another because it more closely approximates the "True Meaning." Deconstruction says there *is* no definitive "True Meaning" based on the text alone.

In calling attention to the effects of texts, to the interaction of texts and social practices, I want to suggest that in distinguishing better interpretations from worse ones, the historical effects of the

text are of utmost importance. This raises the question of which historical effects are desirable and which are not. That is precisely my point: an assessment of the social-symbolic order and a decision about one's allegiances within it are necessary for responsible biblical interpretation.

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Book Reviews

Literary Criticism and the Gospels: The Theoretical Challenge. By Stephen D. Moore. Yale University Press, 1989. 226 pages.

The literary turn in biblical exegesis sets itself off from other major methodological shifts in biblical studies by the degree to which it has relied on theories about texts and models of reading developed outside the biblical field. While most of those who have been involved in explicitly literary approaches to the Gospels have included in their works some degree of methodological reflection, such reflection has often been shaped by the need to make the case for a literary reading to a largely skeptical guild, or to introduce more historically oriented biblical exegetes to the theoretical basics of literary criticism. The appearance of Stephen Moore's study of the methodological underpinnings of the literary movement thus represents a significant step forward for the approach. That it contains both an insightful analysis of recent literary critical attempts as well as a challenging proposition for the future direction of biblical criticism makes it an invaluable contribution to the field.

Moore's goals in his analysis are to provide a "map" of the current terrain in biblical literary study and to show how it relates both to "secular" literary criticism and to other modes of biblical exegesis. He groups the works treated into two principal categories: those which deal with the Gospels in terms of their story—so-called "narrative criticism," which attempts to illuminate the

story's plot, characters, and point of view (Part One)—and those which deal with the experience of reading (Part Two).

In each case, Moore is concerned initially with examining the origins of the interpreter's methodological presuppositions. Most Gospel narrative critics, such as Jack Kingsbury, Robert Tannehill, and David Rhoads, operate out of two interrelated ideas: the unity of the text and the unity and integrity of the "world of the story" (p. 10). Both of these assumptions, Moore notes, arise out of the New Criticism of the 1930s. They represented a formalist response to the rampant historicism which characterized literary theory at the time, whose principal concern was how individual pieces of a text shed light on the historical circumstances (and vice versa). But while it makes sense that biblical literary criticism should take up formalist categories in response to its own historicizing tendencies, Moore is critical of those who fail to recognize either the debt owed to New Criticism or—perhaps especially—the fact that literary theory has itself long since moved on from and has challenged the presuppositions of unity and integrity which underlie a formalist approach.

Although Moore views the literary efforts of Gospel scholars as a welcome and inevitable development, he denies that the Gospel texts are characterized by a clearly discernible formal unity, both in structure and in purpose. Such an assumption is much too "comfortable" (p. 53), he says, and is finally untenable in light of more recent developments in literary theory. Thus, many of even the newer narrative approaches have remained captive to the "mythological" idea which characterizes traditional biblical scholarship: the belief that the goal of all exegesis is to arrive at the single invariant and discoverable "True Meaning" of the Gospel texts and that doing so requires only the sharpening of exegetical methods. In Moore's view, biblical scholarship has worked its way to the edge of a precipice but is afraid to take the leap: "Today, it is not our biblical texts that need demythologizing so much as our ways of reading them" (p. 66). The leap is, of course, the post-structuralist one.

Moore reaches much the same conclusion in Part Two. Most reader-oriented Gospel critics (e.g., Robert Fowler) are for Moore

a mirror image of the narrative critics (p. 80). The focus here is on how an ideal reader works his or her way through the unified, monologic Gospel text. The result is numerous "stories of reading," which place the critic in the role of the "hero," the one who leads the uninitiated reader to the intended understanding of the narrative (p. 92). Such a view represents an extremely narrow appropriation of the implied reader as conceived in secular literary criticism, especially in the post-structuralist mode. Moore refers to this reader as the "repressed reader" (p. 107). Such an approach effectively leaves the "real" reader—the one with a particular socio-cultural context and particular life experiences—out in the cold.

The force of Moore's analysis becomes clear in his concluding chapters. There he begins to draw a picture of what biblical scholarship might look like were it to take the leap into the post-structuralism he advocates, to "exorcise whatever vestiges of naive realism [which] cling to our collective exegetical psyche" (p. 128). Though Moore resists the anarchic tendencies of "hard" deconstructionists, such as Stanley Fish and Jacques Derrida, he calls for the biblical guild to take up the deconstructionist challenge to static meaning and "prediscoursed" content. He calls for a demythologization of contemporary biblical exegesis (see, e.g., pp. 150f). Such a "soft" deconstruction would read neither for the compositional history of a text nor for the overriding literary purpose as evidenced by its structure, but to tease out "the warring forces of signification within the text itself" (p. 166). It would seek out those elements in a text which are *resistant* to sense. (Here he offers a brief reading of Johannine irony as illustration, pp. 159–163.)

Moore's analysis is penetrating and lively. The study is simply "must-read" material for anyone wishing to understand contemporary biblical criticism. But though his challenge to the guild is a timely one, and cannot be ignored, it raises all the questions which have attended deconstruction in whatever form it has taken. The principal problem is perhaps best illustrated by Moore's study itself. To make his case, he is forced to construct the very type of

figure his analysis hopes to eliminate from the scene—the critic as "hero." He has himself constructed a "story of reading"—and yet, in deconstruction, he has taken away the means by which a reader might decide whether his view holds sway. Furthermore, it is not clear that biblical studies must embrace deconstruction, whatever its merits, in order to abandon the notion of a single, static meaning inherent in a text. Biblical hermeneutics has long recognized that texts speak differently in different contexts. Deconstruction, at least in its "untamed" forms, has the potential to eliminate a text's ability to speak at all. Whether it can be tamed remains an open question.

Moore has thus provided us with a superb map, but not with a destination which all will find acceptable.

—JAMES HANSON

Heirs of Paul: Paul's Legacy in the New Testament and in the Church Today. By J. Christiaan Beker. Fortress Press, 1991. 146 pages.

After three books on Paul, J. Christiaan Beker's most recent offering on the post-Pauline writings of the New Testament is very welcome. The author is passionately convinced of the need for the church to continue to interact creatively with the Pauline gospel. The danger is that through anachronistic and literalistic readings, or through deconstructionism, the church may lose its right to claim that it validly and authentically preserves the Christian gospel, at least in its Pauline colors. According to Beker, the strategies adopted by the "heirs of Paul" are potentially a precious guide as to how that might be done or done better by our own generation.

Beker proposes to apply a dual methodology to the post-Pauline literature. This methodology has both comparative and traditio-historical components. The former examines the extent to which the heirs "were able to do justice to the claims of Paul's original gospel." The latter seeks to determine "how these interpreters adapted Paul's gospel as a living and relevant voice to the new historical circumstances of their time" (p. 16). In this way Beker

hopes to avoid the common summary dismissal of the post-Pauline material as unworthy of Paul.

Beker takes issue with the view that Christianity is whatever it becomes in the tradition. Such a view "authorizes the loss of an authentic Christian identity with the result that Christianity has no distinctive character of its own" (p. 17). This is precisely the issue with many seminarians. When Paul—or the Bible, for that matter—ceases to speak meaningfully, it is not just because certain pronouncements are not accorded normative value. The real problem is perceived to be the language of the gospel itself. How is it possible for a first-century message to be meaningful in today's world?

As the reader discovers in chapter two, Beker is optimistic that it is possible to translate what he takes to be the central, abiding, and internally consistent concerns—i.e., the coherence—of Paul's gospel, apocalyptic coordinates and all, into language which is both faithful to Paul and understandable to the contemporary church. While fully appreciating the difficulties and challenges of the task, Beker runs the risk of being perceived naive. The coherent core seems just as culture-bound as Paul's pronouncements on sex, marriage, the role of women, and slavery.

Chapter three is a comparative analysis of the post-Pauline writings. Beker sets himself against the view that these writings represent a falling away from the true Paul (p. 36). Yet it is hard to imagine a more devastating critique of this material. In the Pastoral Epistles, Paul's dynamic language is "petrified." Paul is presented as a "static" and "dogmatic" person. He engages in monologue. Dynamic and relational Pauline concepts (such as *righteousness*) become terms of pragmatic moral injunction. The parousia hope is fading.

In Luke-Acts the author promotes a "culture-friendly" Paul who preaches the same message wherever he goes. The Lukan Paul faithfully adheres to the teaching of the Jerusalem apostles (p. 50). He submits himself dutifully to the apostolic witness. He is a pillar of orthodoxy, a man of "glamour" and "strength" (p. 53).

In Colossians, Paul has assumed heroic status. Here we encounter the Paul of "blessed memory." The writer's commitment to

doing contextual theology is present in this letter in a way absent from Acts and the Pastorals. There is not much in Colossians that betrays the author as a post-Paulinist.

Ephesians, on the other hand, lacks contingent features, though it is an imaginative and creative reworking of Pauline ideas. Instead of placing the church on an apocalyptic trajectory, the author portrays the church as the arena in which God's eschatological and ecumenical purposes are already realized. The author of 2 Thessalonians duplicates Paul "by copying as much as possible from 1 Thessalonians" (p. 73). This letter has a didactic and impersonal tone. Although the author has adopted Paul's hermeneutical strategy, he has simply modulated Paul's gospel as expressed in 1 Thessalonians "in an almost literal way" to his own but different situation. The presence of the apocalyptic timetable in 2 Thessalonians 2 betrays the author's distance from the thinking of the historical Paul.

Chapter four proposes to examine the contingencies operating on the authors which dictated the manner in which they appropriated the tradition. We have already seen the rather poor performance of the post-Pauline authors in adapting the Pauline tradition and Pauline strategies. Thus we cannot expect the application of the traditio-historical method to shed much light on their circumstances. Moreover, we simply do not know what those circumstances were, precisely because they did not do contextual theology as Paul did. (Colossians is a possible exception.) Does Beker, therefore, critique the post-Pauline authors simply on the grounds that they were not second generation Pauls?

The final chapter addresses the task and challenge of adapting Paul for today in light of the attempts made by the post-Pauline authors to adapt Paul for their own time. There are "pseudo-adaptations" today, just as there were in the first century.

Beker begins by staking out his position quite clearly. On p. 100 he implies that he wants to do New Testament theology within the confessional framework of the canon of scripture, a canon which includes Paul and the heirs of Paul; a canon which, to quote Beker, "we confess to be the normative source of Christian life and practice."

What do we do, though, when the canon enshrines the inept and unimaginative adaptations of Paul as well as the more creative adaptations (like Colossians)? Presumably we do not want to appeal to some doctrine of mechanical inspiration by which to safeguard the authority of the post-Paulines. But what authority can they have when they show us how not to translate Paul for today? Can we even be sure that they have grasped the essentials of the Pauline gospel?

Reader-response criticism may provide an attractive alternative here since its proponents define what is valuable by what is meaningful in the text for the community. But Beker allows neither this approach nor that of the literalist/anachronist. Their only claim on our attention appears to be their commitment to making Paul speak to a new situation, even though we might judge that by and large the writers themselves did not successfully translate the Pauline gospel.

While we might assent that we are under a similar obligation to acknowledge "the burden of the tradition" (p. 116), we might also wish that Beker had investigated the post-Pauline literature in such a way as to allow them to be assessed more on their own terms rather than exclusively through the interpretive grid provided by the genuine Pauline deposit.

—MARK HARDING

Königsherrschaft Gottes und himmlischer Kult im Judentum, Urchristentum und in der hellenistischen Welt. Ed. Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 55. J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1991. 495 pages.

This volume of 11 essays had its beginnings in an "Oberseminar" held in 1986–1987 at the home of Martin Hengel, now professor emeritus of New Testament at the University of Tübingen. It took further shape at a symposium the following spring in honor of Hengel's 60th birthday. The original aim of the seminar, in which the present reviewer participated, was to read and discuss critically the "new hymnic texts from Early Judaism and Christianity," such

as the *Shirot 'Olat ha-Shabbat* from Qumran and Masada (cf. C. Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice,* [Atlanta, 1985]), some relatively unknown Christian liturgical fragments, and hymns from the later merkabah literature edited in Peter Schäfer's *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur* (Tübingen, 1981).

The scope of the seminar was later narrowed. Hengel (p. 1) offers two reasons for this. First, terms denoting God's kingship appear with surprising frequency in the *Shirot* (*melek* occurs 55 times; *malkût,* 21). This called for an analysis of the purpose of the document, its Jewish traditio-historical context, and the significance of its ideas for conceptions of kingship in the New Testament. Second, Camponovo's assessment of divine kingship in Second Temple Judaism (*Königtum, Königsherrschaft und Reich Gottes in den Frühjüdischen Schriften* [Freiburg, 1984]) omits some important early Jewish texts (e.g., Philo, early Jewish prayers, and the unpublished *Shirot*), while unnecessarily including some *later* texts (targums). Thus, Jewish traditions concerning the reign of God as king became the focus of the seminar.

Camponovo's uneven selection of sources, his sometimes sharp distinction between present and eschatological connotations of kingship, and his lack of historical contextualization resulted in some misleading claims. Hengel urged the seminar participants to address these.

Camponovo concludes that the motif of God's kingship "does not play a prominent role" in the extant sources, except in Daniel. He often dismisses categorically the existence of an eschatological dimension whenever the perennial qualities of God's "kingdom" and activity as "king" are mentioned, a distinction which repeatedly surfaces in his discussion of the Qumran and "Essene" sources. Hengel's preface and Schwemer's essays vigorously counter these two points. Camponovo also follows Norman Perrin's lead in regarding kingship terminology as "symbolic." In contrast, most of the contributors to this volume insist that references to God as "king" and to God's "kingdom" are "metaphorical," not symbolic.

Unfortunately, none of the essays clarifies the differences between these approaches. Hengel does briefly explain that

whereas Camponovo focuses on concepts *underlying* attested words with the roots *mlk* and βασιλ–, other terms belonging to the same metaphorical complex may equally suggest divine kingship (p. 5). Study of this motif should thus take into account related images, such as *throne, scepter, crown,* and *palace.* One should also consider other divine metaphors in ancient literature, such as *father* and *creator.* Though not explicitly stated, this approach tries to steer between two extremes. The study of kingship in Early Judaism should exceed the superficial bounds of a word study like Camponovo's without being absorbed into the broader notion of God's triumph (*contra* John Gray, *The Biblical Doctrine of the Reign of God,* [Edinburgh, 1979]; see pp. 223–275).

These essays address the infelicities in Camponovo's work and explain Early Jewish traditions of divine kingship in relation to attitudes toward the temple cult and developments in Hellenistic thought. As one would expect, Hengel and his associates carry out a well-documented analysis of primary materials. The contributions are devoted to specific political, philosophical, and religious texts in which the "Königsmetaphorik" played an integral role: (1) Klaus W. Müller: "König und Vater" (on kingship and related metaphors in Aristotle, Persia, and Philo); (2) Anna Maria Schwemer: "Gott als König in den Sabbatliedern" and "Irdischer und himmlischer König" (early Jewish literature, the *Shirot,* and the "David Apocalypse" preserved in the Hekhalot texts); (3) Helmut Merkel: "Die Gottesherrschaft in der Verkündigung Jesu"; (4) Hengel: "Reich Gottes und Weltreich im Johannesevangelium" (Jesus' confrontation with Pilate in the Johannine passion narrative); (5) Hermut Löhr, "Thronversammlung und preisender Tempel" (a comparison of temple ideology and kingship in the *Shirot* and Hebrews); (6) Naoto Umemoto: "Die Königsherrschaft Gottes bei Philon" (kingship and divine epithets in Philo); (7) Beate Ego: "Gottes Weltherrschaft und die Einzigkeit seines Namens" and "Der Diener im Palast des himmlischen Königs" (the Mekhilta de R. Ishmael and temple theology in rabbinic literature); (8) Thomas Lehnardt: "Der Gott der Welt ist unser König" (synagogue prayers); and (9) Christoph

Markschies: "Platons König oder Vater Jesu Christi" (the influence of Plato's concept of kingship on views of God in Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, and Valentinus).

The essays as a whole reflect two concerns. First, there is a continuing need to come to terms with "the kingdom of God" in Jesus' proclamation. Only the essay by Merkel focuses directly on the figure of Jesus behind the Gospel presentations. While Merkel provides a useful evaluation of hypotheses regarding the apocalyptic background to Jesus' message, he over-generalizes concerning what Jews must have understood about divine kingship during this period. Merkel's perspective contrasts with the diversity of Second Temple Judaism reflected in the other chapters. The second concern, clearly related to the first, is whether divine kingship is a prominent motif in early Jewish literature, and, if so, how one is to account for its significance.

As Schwemer observes, the *Shirot* brings together three elements: (1) angelic worship, (2) observance of the sabbath, and (3) God as "king" and God's heavenly "kingdom." These elements also converge in Jubilees (2:17-22; 50:9f.). Moreover, the Qedushah (Isa. 6:3; cf. Ezek. 3:12) and Song of the Red Sea (cf. esp. Ex. 15:17f.) were reserved in Palestinian tradition for the sabbath at an early period (cf. the third benediction in *Shemoneh 'esreh* and Mincha offering). This contrasts markedly with the absence of divine kingship in Ps. 92, which LXX tradition associates with the sabbath, presumably with respect to the Jerusalem temple cult.

Since 2 Maccabees 1:7 considers the apostasy of the high priest Jason as a fall from "the kingdom," Schwemer infers that the restoration of the temple cult was accompanied by a celebration of God's kingship. In fact, a general pattern for early Palestinian Judaism began to emerge in certain circles. The reign of God in heaven became prominent in contexts expressing a temple ideology, whether as a polemic against the existing Jerusalem cult (e.g., Qumran), or as an attempt to come to terms with the temple's defilement and destruction by Gentiles (e.g., Psalms of Solomon 17; rabbinic prayers). Furthermore, the *Shirot* and other early

Jewish documents show that eschatological expectation and the idea of God's present, transcendent rule are not mutually exclusive. The heavenly temple, where God reigns eternally, defines an eschatological hope which awaits a new temple on the earthly Zion (e.g., 11QTemple 29.9-10 and 4QFlor 1.5-6).

This volume covers a wide range of material. As its detailed indexes show, it provides readers with a wealth of information. Whatever one makes of the distinctiveness of Jesus and of the movement he generated, his proclamation of God's rule in the Gospels has points of contact with contemporary Jewish thought. This signals the need for further exploration. For instance, in what ways does Jesus' emphasis on divine kingship imply a critique of the temple cult? Was the message of Jesus primarily concerned with God's *present* rule or with God's *eschatological* rule? While New Testament scholars often wrestle with the latter question, certain documents attest that transcendence and eschatology cannot be separated. It is ultimately *how* these aspects are related in the New Testament and Early Judaism that constitutes the *crux interpretum.*

—LOREN T. STUCKENBRUCK

Awash in a Sea of Faith: The Christianizing of the American People. By Jon Butler. Harvard University Press, 1990. 347 pages.

Jon Butler's book is a rare find in that it is both extensively documented and pleasant to read. He exhibits a broad reading in the original and secondary sources and offers an iconoclastic revision of American religious history which challenges several traditional assumptions about the role of religion in antebellum and colonial America.

Butler believes the church had little impact on American society before the Revolution. Only after the Revolution, when the church co-opted the rhetoric of freedom and American greatness, did Christianity begin to dominate American culture. Butler attacks strongly the prevalent picture of American religious life in the eighteenth century as one of decline from the vigor of the seventeenth century. In Butler's presentation, the church was

marginal to society in the seventeenth century, even in New England.

Interestingly, Butler virtually ignores the Middle Colonies, particularly Pennsylvania. This seriously impairs his thesis. I suspect the omission was intentional, since Pennsylvania does not fit his scheme. The massive immigration of English Quakers and German sectaries in the first decades of the colony reveals a strong religious current in society. The unchurched Lutherans and Reformed had strong religious sentiments, often building churches without a pastor. Furthermore, Butler bases his thesis on a questionable assumption about church membership which completely violates the definition of religion given in the introduction. He defines religion as belief in the supernatural (questionable in itself), but Christian adherence in terms of institutional attachment. These are contradictory modes which should not be compared.

The most interesting part of Butler's book is the section on superstition in America. He shows how prevalent alchemical and astrological beliefs were. This supports his thesis that colonial Americans were essentially pagan in religion, not Christian. While his evidence does seriously challenge traditional historiographic assumptions about the twin pillars of colonial society—Christianity and Enlightenment—it is also flawed in several respects. An analysis of the Pennsylvania Germans demonstrates that extremely devout Christians such as the Mennonites could believe in the efficacy of hex signs and water-witching without any sense of contradiction. Christian mythology includes angels and demons, and the God of Providence might choose to work through magical charms and wise women.

While the Puritans found all such manifestations to be of Satan, other Christians were more sanguine about benign spirits and charms. Furthermore, Butler's assertion that the Enlightenment had no effect on the ending of witchcraft contradicts the evidence he presents himself. According to Butler, the reluctance of magistrates to try persons for witchcraft demonstrates the decline of witchcraft. He then argues that the legal prescriptions against

witchcraft caused the decline. However, he clearly shows that the magistrates declared witchcraft a chimera and refused to convict persons of it. Usually they used Enlightenment arguments against the possibility of intercourse with demons.

Butler is driven by his thesis to minimize the Great Awakening. In fact, he reduces it to an interpretative fiction created by Tracy in the 1840s. This will no doubt generate controversy among historians. By minimizing the Great Awakening, Butler can reject traditional claims for the role of the Awakening in American society. He asserts that America was only slightly more Christian after 1740 than before. Instead of a climatic revival, Butler prefers a thesis of gradual growth of churches throughout the eighteenth century.

There was one large block of unchristian humanity in Colonial America. Butler offers an impassioned discussion of the "spiritual holocaust" experienced by the African slaves brought to this country. Butler asserts that although the tribal religions were destroyed, some elements of those religions survived. He makes a helpful distinction between belief systems and beliefs and describes in detail the nature of those beliefs (e.g., vodou). Butler also perceptively describes the development of the master mentality, laying the blame on Anglican missionaries with their hierarchical theories of obedience. For Butler, the destruction of the African belief system allowed Christianity to fill the religious void in slave religion. However, the remnants of tribal belief shaped how Christianity was received. The major problem with this view is the great time lag between the arrival of Africans in the seventeenth century and the mass conversions in the nineteenth century.

Butler's greatest challenge to traditional historiography is his assertion that the state church model prevailed in America. Whereas most interpreters have highlighted the individualism latent and at times overt in American evangelicalism, Butler argues that the successful churches (Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist) were based on "coercion, territoriality, and public ceremonialism" (p. 165). He points to the founding of the Philadelphia

Baptist association in 1707 and the Philadelphia Synod in 1715 as organizations based on the state church model. He also challenges the traditional view that the dissenters were preaching anti-authoritarianism by pointing to the authority of the pastor in evangelical churches. In Butler's argument, since there was no rejection of authority, per se, the dissenters were just as authoritarian as their predecessors.

There are major difficulties with this thesis. Butler completely ignores the most fundamental difference between Europe and America; namely, disestablishment. There is no possibility for a state church when the state refuses to participate. Furthermore, he ignores the collapse of the state church model of New England. There is a world of difference between the Congregationalism of the Saybrook Platform and the Godly Society of Winthrop.

The fundamental problem is Butler's confusion over the meaning of coercion and authority. In a state church model, coercion means the use of political and physical force to compel assent to religious tenets and to prohibit nonconformist practices. The state can use taxes, fines, imprisonment, beatings, and burning at the stake to enforce religious institutions and beliefs. Territoriality means these rules apply in a given geographical area. There is no way that this describes a Presbyterian Synod or Baptist Association or Quaker Yearly Meeting. Yes, they covered a territory, but they included only those who voluntarily assented to their authority. Yes, they enforced discipline, but they had no true coercive power. They could not physically or financially harm the person being disciplined. All they could do is to exclude the individual or the congregation from fellowship. In short, membership and the acceptance of authority were both voluntary.

In conclusion, Butler offers a vigorous challenge to most of the assumptions of traditional historiography and may force a rethinking of those assumptions. Butler's effort is valuable in many respects, particularly in his strong challenge to commonplace assumptions that Puritanism was the only, or at least the determinative, influence in the formation of an American faith. His rejection of the Great Awakening should stimulate a renewed

interest in the historiography of this phenomenon and his analysis of "superstition" provides much needed information.

The strongest chapters of the book are those on the religion of the slaves and on non-Christian supernaturalism. His comments on popular religion and the religion of the laity close an important gap in contemporary scholarship and should provide impetus for similar research by other scholars. However, Butler's method and thesis are seriously flawed and his conclusions should be read with caution.

—CRAIG D. ATWOOD

Bradley J. Longfield. *The Presbyterian Controversy: Fundamentalists, Modernists, and Moderates.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1991. 333 pages.

The historiography of American Protestant fundamentalism has undergone several revisions in the twentieth century. Earlier observers, like H. Richard Niebuhr, Richard Hofstadter, Norman Furniss, and Robert T. Handy, focused on intellectual aspects or the social origins of fundamentalism. Fundamentalists were depicted more or less as captives of a rural, premodern, anti-intellectual mind set. Others, like Stewart Cole, devoted primary attention to the major theological differences between fundamentalists and liberals. He portrayed fundamentalists as the defenders of nineteenth-century Protestant orthodoxy.

Ernest Sandeen also concentrated on theological matters. He concluded that the roots of fundamentalism lie in the late nineteenth-century coalition of premillennialists and Princeton inerrantists. More recently, George Marsden has not only broadened the definition of fundamentalism; he has also centered on important cultural and philosophical aspects of the movement. Early twentieth-century fundamentalism was a collection of revivalistic evangelicals, premillennialists, denominational traditionalists, and holiness advocates. They were united by their militant opposition to modernism and their common commitment to Scottish Common Sense Realism.

The battle within the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. in the 1920s and 1930s has served as an important case study in many of these analyses. Longfield's work marks an advance of this discussion. He synthesizes many of the issues raised by previous interpretations, most notably that of Marsden. He also elevates the entire discussion because he revises, refines, or rejects certain parts of all previous interpreters. Longfield outlines the history of the fundamentalist-modernist conflict within the Presbyterian Church from its beginning with the controversy over the Baptist Harry Emerson Fosdick's preaching in a New York City Presbyterian pulpit in 1922 through the schism of 1936. He tells the story through the biographies of the six key protagonists (moving left to right on the theological spectrum): Henry Sloane Coffin, Robert E. Speer, Charles R. Erdman, William Jennings Bryan, Clarence E. Macartney, and J. Gresham Machen. Longfield takes into account not only the theological, ecclesiological, and philosophical commitments of each participant but also their cultural backgrounds.

Because he places the entire history of the conflict in the religious, intellectual, and social context of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the work avoids the pitfalls of a narrow denominational history and serves as a window into the larger issues of the day. As a study of the Presbyterian conflict, this book far exceeds the interpretations of previous historians.

Writing of these six key figures, Longfield observes, "All were economically secure, well-educated, patrician-minded gentlemen of the late Victorian era. All were members of the dominant cultural tradition in America" (p. 237). Each, however, had his distinctive personal histories and cherished different theological, ecclesiological, philosophical, and cultural beliefs. Longfield uses these factors to explain not only the unique role each played within the conflict, but also the final outcome of the conflict itself.

Longfield's biographical analysis of each figure is sophisticated. Henry Sloane Coffin was a pastor of the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church and later a president of Union Seminary. He grew up in New York City, the epitome of the secular and urban society that would come to dominate the Northern United States. He not

only accommodated his theology to the modernist impulse; he also fought to make the Presbyterian Church tolerant of it in order to maintain Christianity's intellectual and social relevancy.

Robert E. Speer, the longtime leader of foreign missions, was raised in Middle America (as were the three following figures). He was a theological disciple of Horace Bushnell's liberal evangelicalism and to a lesser extent of the revivalistic evangelicalism of Dwight L. Moody. He was intent on maintaining the unity of the church for the sake of world evangelism.

Princeton professor Charles R. Erdman was influenced primarily by Moody's irenic evangelicalism and held an inclusive ecclesiology. His moderate position tolerated liberalism within the church for the sake of unity.

William Jennings Bryan, the sole anti-intellectual of the group, was less concerned with theological modernism in the church than with crushing Darwinism. For him, Darwinism symbolized all that threatened "Christian America" after the first World War. Had he survived his infamous defeat at the Scopes Trial, Bryan, ever the politician skilled in the art of compromise, would have joined Erdman and Speer's moderate position.

Clarence Macartney was a gifted fundamentalist preacher. He sided with J. Gresham Machen's militant opposition to Coffin's modernism and Erdman and Speer's ecclesiological inclusivism up to the point of schism.

Longfield describes J. Gresham Machen as the militant defender of the "Princeton Theology." Machen was an ecclesiological exclusivist and a Scottish Common Sense Realist who was always pushing ideas to their logical extreme or conclusion. Most importantly, perhaps, in Longfield's analysis, Machen was a Southerner who invoked the traditional Southern solution to disagreement: secession. When Machen failed to arouse enough support to allow his position to dominate affairs he decided to act. Just as the Confederacy withdrew from the Union in 1861 when there was no more ground from agreement, Machen saw separation from Princeton Seminary, the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, and the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., as a legitimate and noble alternative to toleration.

Longfield notes some rather surprising similarities, differences, and alliances between the figures. For example, in a day when prohibition united liberals like Coffin with fundamentalists like Bryan, Machen's "wet" position cost him crucial support within the church at the height of the controversy. Coffin and Bryan were also interested in industrial relations and the reform of America's economic structures. Bryan's social gospel, however, was distinctively evangelical and populist, while Coffin's was urban and elitist.

The most controversial part of this work is the epilogue. Everyone knows mainline religion is declining in membership. Longfield (among others) suggests that one of the sources of this decline is doctrinal pluralism. The church lacks a unifying theological identity which would help differentiate it from its surrounding culture and would allow it to speak prophetically to it. The roots of theological inclusivity within the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., lay in the conflict of the 1920s and 1930s. Unwittingly, Longfield argues, moderates like Speer and Erdman exchanged theological consensus for church unity. Within the past three decades, this tradeoff has come to bear fruit—or not bear fruit, as the case may be. Longfield's advice is simple: the church needs doctrinal consensus, not doctrinal confusion.

Regardless of whether one agrees with his counsel, Longfield makes a valuable contribution to the history of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy.

—PAUL C. KEMENY

The Theology of John Fisher. By Richard Rex. Cambridge University Press, 1991. 293 pages.

Scholars have traditionally viewed the English Reformation from one of two perspectives. The first approach is to examine the popular undercurrents of faith and religious expression. Historians like A. G. Dickens (*The English Reformation,* 2d ed. London, 1989) and more recently Robert Whiting (*The Blind Devotion of the People: Popular Religion and the English Reformation;* Cambridge,

1989) have adopted this method in analyzing the ideological currents at work in late medieval Europe. An alternate avenue to understanding the movement places the emphasis on the outstanding personalities and their use of power in this turbulent period. G. R. Elton, J. J. Scarisbrick, and now, Richard Rex, have taken this route in their study of the Reformation in England.

Rex's theological study of John Fisher is a welcome addition to the growing body of literature reexamining the English Reformation. John Fisher, the bishop of Rochester, was one of the victims of Henry VIII's program to separate the English church from Rome. John Fisher has not been charitably served by history. He was vilified by sixteenth-century pamphleteers and later overshadowed by his contemporary who shared the same fate, Sir Thomas More. In an effort to rehabilitate the beleaguered bishop, Rex has attempted to locate Fisher's thought and theology in their proper intellectual context.

Rex centers his study on Fisher's polemical writings. The bishop was involved in three major controversies: the debates concerning the Lutheran Reformation, the humanist critique of Scripture, and the quarrel over Henry VIII's divorce. Introducing this major section of the book, Rex also briefly investigates Fisher's education, his relationship with the humanists, and his sermons.

The book's strongest section consists of the middle four chapters, where Rex examines Fisher's relationship to and arguments against the Lutheran Reformation. Apart from these chapters, the book's arguments are uneven and lack a certain coherence. Although he is a careful scholar, Rex fails to follow up on his many promising beginnings (e.g., chapter two, Fisher's sermons; and chapter three, the bishop and humanism). He does not integrate them into a central and compact thesis.

Nonetheless, Rex presents us with a satisfying intellectual portrait of John Fisher. Fisher was not a simple scholastic; he owed a greater debt to the patristic writers than to scholastics like Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus. On the other side of the equation, the bishop evinced a healthy interest in humanist scholarship. He was a friend of Erasmus, a correspondent with Reuchlin, and an

admirer of Pico. Fisher even dabbled in arcane and hermetic Cabalistic studies. Theologically, Rex has rescued Fisher from charges of Pelagianism. Ecumenical dialogue has tended to dismiss the early polemical opponents of Luther's theory of justification as Pelagians. Through a careful reevaluation of the sources, Rex has placed Fisher squarely in the Augustinian tradition. But beyond all these intellectual considerations, John Fisher was a loyal son of the church. Neither medieval nor modern, the bishop of Rochester was more open to change and reform than many of his detractors have admitted. Nevertheless, as a devoted churchman, he could not take that final and decisive step of severing ties with Rome.

Is the John Fisher we meet here very surprising? Rex goes to great lengths to demonstrate that Fisher straddled scholasticism and humanism, but history rarely gives us a character who neatly falls within a narrowly defined category. As Paul Kristeller has shown, even the word *humanism* is problematic and carries with it little descriptive substance. At times, Rex's treatment of Fisher is simplistic, if not covertly hagiographic. Concerning the bishop's showdown with Henry VIII on the matter of the divorce, Rex melodramatically declaims, "Nevertheless he [Fisher] found himself on the losing side, as power and self-interest trampled on truth and decency" (p. 183).

Concerning the book's larger goal of contributing to the debate around the English Reformation, this volume has limited utility. Revisionism often functions more effectively as a negative check to scholarship than as a positive step of producing a new theory or set of ideas. As a revisionist, Rex explains more convincingly why the Reformation should not have succeeded than why it did. His narrow focus on Fisher's theology ignores other critical features of the movement. The English Reformation was a result of religious, political, national, and legal issues merging in this era.

Finally, this book brings with it a puzzling paradox. Rex has offered an intellectual study of a prominent figure in the early English Reformation. At the same time, however, he continually insists that Fisher himself was no intellectual in the traditional

sense. Rather, he is best understood through his clerical duties as bishop. If this approach is the key to apprehending Fisher and his importance in those troubled times, why has Rex presented a purely intellectual portrait of a bishop who should be studied and analyzed on a more pragmatic level?

—HOWARD LOUTHAN

Systematic Theology, vol 1. By Wolfhart Pannenberg, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991. 473 pages.

Wolfhart Pannenberg has proven a fount of creative scholarship in his ongoing effort to take seriously advances in science and philosophy and to use them when articulating the essentials of the classical Christian faith. Consequently, many of his major works have investigated the intersection of theology and the sciences. We have thus been left to speculate on how, precisely, he might work out a comprehensive theological system.

This fine translation of the first volume of his *Systematic Theology* is bringing such speculation to an end. Typically erudite, clearly developed, tightly argued, painstakingly researched, and replete with historical investigations, Pannenberg's *Systematic Theology* is a sophisticated volume which will richly reward the study of theologians of any persuasion.

This first volume delineates a prolegomena and the doctrines of revelation, the Trinity, and God. Pannenberg makes no radical departures from previous positions as he carefully integrates all aspects of his thought into a well-focused Christian systematic theology. He begins by developing his idea that the question of the truth of Christian doctrine can serve as the theme of systematic theology. This subtle and perhaps debatable move allows him simultaneously to ascribe a dual status to theological propositions. He treats them both as certain convictions (for the faithful) and as hypotheses open to scientific consideration (for all others). He then delineates the proper place of natural theology, striving to mark out a narrow path between the subjectivism of Barth (!) and

of liberal theology on the one side and scientific reductionism on the other. This leads into a chapter on "The Reality of God and the Gods in the Experience of the Religions," a contemporary and open analysis of the precise function of the word *God* in the world's religions. "The Revelation of God" is a transitional chapter which focuses on the biblical tradition and leads naturally into a consideration of the trinitarian God.

Pannenberg's treatment of the world religions does not differ in principle from what could have been allowed by those predecessors who included natural theologies. While Pannenberg values degrees of truth in the conceptions of God found in the world religions, his Christian understanding of Jesus Christ as the revealed Word of God implies that Christianity alone expresses the fullest revelation of God.

Having established this, he moves beyond prolegomena and treats "The Trinitarian God" and "The Unity and Attributes of the Divine Essence." Pannenberg is clearly committed to delineating the one truth, ever our goal but never our possession, which corresponds to and builds upon the reality of God—that truth which Christian theologians through the centuries have tried fallibly to articulate. Nevertheless, like others, he seeks always to "begin again at the beginning."

One of the more distinctive aspects of Pannenberg's systematic theology is its attention to the evolution of doctrine. Barth incorporated much historical detail into his notes and most systematic theologians have made appeals to historical figures. Pannenberg, however, works historical analyses of the complex evolution of particular doctrines into the very fabric of the argument. This is a major strength of the work, for it adds depth and a historical specificity of understanding more elusive in those typical systematics which "concentrate solely on the essential coherence of the dogmatic themes" (p. x). Whether addressing natural theology, the authority of scripture, or the Trinity, Pannenberg advances his own position only after clearly delineating the critical turning points in the history of the evolution of the idea he is treating. This enables one to discern the nuances of Pannenberg's

positions and to plumb his rationale to an otherwise impossible depth.

Unfortunately, it is at precisely this juncture that a methodological shortcoming becomes apparent. Pannenberg explicitly defends his historical approach: "Christian doctrine is from first to last a historical construct. Its content rests on the historical revelation of God in the historical figure of Jesus Christ" (p. x). Here Pannenberg appears to acknowledge the contextual nature of thought—that one must take specific contexts into account even when addressing the eternal truth of the one God. But we discern a disturbing ambiguity when Pannenberg later notes, "This presentation does not disown its confessional origin, although it must be stressed that it does not deal with a Lutheran or even a European (as opposed, e.g., to a Latin American) theology, but simply the truth of Christian doctrine and the Christian confession" (p. xiii). In short, Pannenberg does not adequately appreciate that recognizing Christian doctrine as "historical construct" entails acknowledging the distinctive but equally valid constructs of alternative "histories." Within the Christian tradition itself we must dialogue among properly distinct constructs aiming at the same truth.

Thus, Pannenberg's claim to develop "simply the truth of Christian doctrine," a truth not particularly Lutheran or European or Latin American, is unintelligible. Pannenberg's presentation certainly does not "disown its confessional origin"—that is never even a remote threat. What it does not do sufficiently is acknowledge its particularity in relation to either the centuries-old non-European streams of Christian thought or those submerged European streams which remain obscured by dominant voices.

Two examples illustrate the implications of this failure. In the first instance, Pannenberg speculates condescendingly that the third world churches might contribute to the comparison of world religions. But he never takes seriously the possibility that their context might lead to essential insights *within* the Christian tradition—insights distinct from mainstream European tradition but absolutely necessary for any comprehensive systematic theology in the late twentieth century.

In the second instance, he defends vigorously the exclusive trinitarian use of the term "Father" within the confines of the European mainstream. To his credit, he argues clearly that this term originally implied no "sense of sexual distinction." But in a work self-consciously attentive to history, he utterly fails to attend to the despicable history of effects which the eventual sex-specific understanding of this term allowed and even fostered.

On the dust jacket John B. Cobb terms this work a "lifetime of creative work now [come] to fruition. . . ." I unhesitatingly concur with this assessment and recommend this rich work. Cobb, however, continues, ". . . in what is likely to prove the greatest systematic theology of his generation." With this cryptic remark the work is simultaneously praised and relegated to a bygone era.

Unfortunately, I think such carefully qualified praise is apropos. It is not uncommon to hear speculation on how Barth or Tillich would have developed had they lived into our day. How would they have integrated the world religions into the fabric of their theology? How would they relate themselves to the diverse theological constructs of the people of faith speaking the truth in different historical contexts? How would they respond to the voices of the marginalized and oppressed, newly heard as they call out across continents and centuries?

Pannenberg is passionately committed to the tradition revered by Barth and Tillich. He is a theologian worthy of these giants. He would have been worthy of these next great constructive tasks. One can hardly avoid being disappointed at having to conclude with cryptic praise: It is likely to prove the greatest systematic theology of his generation.

—WILLIAM N. A. GREENWAY, JR.

Tragic Vision and Divine Compassion: A Contemporary Theodicy. By Wendy Farley. Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990. 150 pages.

Death camps in Nazi Germany. Violence against women and children in their own homes. Oppressive governments who kill to control. How do we understand God in light of such radical evil?

For Christians who believe in a God who is in control of every event, radical suffering might be understood as the just punishment of God for human sin, as a "test" which strengthens human faith, or as an evil which plays a necessary role in God's larger plan for redemption. And yet are not certain kinds of suffering irredeemably destructive and unjust?

In *Tragic Vision and Divine Compassion: A Contemporary Theodicy,* Wendy Farley argues that classic Christian theodicies interpret the problem of evil and suffering within a moralistic context: humans willfully choose evil in rebellion against God. The story of the Fall demonstrates perfectly the free human decision to sin against God. God, whose power is one of domination, consequently brings suffering upon humans both to punish their sinful rebellion and to turn them toward the good. Such theodicies, which interpret all suffering as intended by God and therefore as *meaningful,* have no category for unjust and destructive suffering. Convinced that some suffering is meaningless, Farley argues for a shift from the moralistic to the tragic interpretation of evil. God is not the author of suffering, but meets suffering with the power of compassion.

In chapters one to three, Farley argues for a "tragic paradigm" for understanding the human condition. The world is not just, Farley claims, in opposition to the traditional paradigm. In fact, the world is tragic. Little children are raped and beaten by their fathers. Chilean forces electrically torture a girl in front of her mother. Events of radical suffering reveal that chaos, absurdity, and forces of violence often win in history. Although suffering brought by some types of sickness, separation, or death is part of the goodness of finite life and can at times encourage the growth of the human spirit, radical suffering offers no such promise.

Radical suffering strips away humanity and turns human beings into objects. It snuffs out all sparks of self-respect with humiliation and self-deprecating pain. Self-hatred becomes an overwhelming power. Suffering human beings no longer have the capacity to resist their own destruction. Events of radical suffering cannot, then, be explained as just punishment for sin or as pedagogy for redemption, argues Farley. That suffering which destroys the

human spirit must never be understood as "good for" or "deserved" by the victim.

Farley argues that any power that dominates is incapable of redeeming victims of radical suffering. Even process theology's "power of persuasion" is at odds with the liberating task, according to Farley, because it seeks to effect change by coercing and dominating others. A different type of power is needed, a power which can effect change within others without dominating them. Compassion, which is more than an interior emotion or mode of relationship, is a power which counters the self-destructive powers of radical suffering. Compassion comforts and heals by standing with the sufferer in solidarity and understanding. Compassion engenders in others the desire and interior power to resist self-destruction. Unlike domination, however, compassion is a type of power which by nature is not absolute. This is precisely because compassion's offer of mediated power is contingent upon the response of the sufferer.

It is this "nonabsolute" quality of the power of compassion which provides the bedrock of Farley's theodicy discussion in chapters four and five. The presence of evil, which distorts creation and causes radical suffering, is due partially to the "tragic structures" of created finitude and human freedom, structures which inevitably result in conflict and attempts at domination. Evil's presence is also due to the "tragic structure" of divine love (p. 106). Because the power of divine love is not causally absolute, God has created a world in which God does not have the power to prevent evil and radical suffering. Radical suffering is unexplainable, irredeemable, and not the will of God. Incarnate in the love of others, God's compassion empowers the victim to resist the degradation of his or her spirit.

Farley's writing style will appeal to those who look for powerful images and passionate stances. Yet her frequent lack of thoroughness in discussing theological terms and issues may frustrate others. For example, Farley never discusses whether humans in the fallen world have the capacity, without the aid of divine compassion, to resist personal or structural forces of evil.

Do human beings even have the power to accept the divine compassion offered to them?

Second, Farley is unclear about how Scripture is authoritative for her constructive theology. Specifically, how does she interpret events such as the Exodus or the Exile? Is she suggesting that the Hebrew slaves freed themselves with their God-given "fierce resistance"? Ultimately, she reduces the variety of God's actions in relation to human sin and suffering to one—that of compassion.

Along with these questions of clarification, three questions concerning the content of Farley's book emerge. First, is Farley correct that for the creation to be a genuine "other" in relation to God, God must give it an autonomy "independent" of God? Second, and closely related to this question, does not Farley's eschatology move toward a "cosmic dualism"? She argues that God is in an eternal struggle with the powers of evil which cause suffering and block the presence of divine compassion. Divine and human struggles for justice and redemption can have "moments of victory," but they can never defeat evil (pp. 125–128). In this sense, her ultimate paradigm is truly "tragic." Is this tragic vision, which rejects the divine promises and the human hopes for the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God, coherent with the Christian tradition? Finally, is this God really good—this God who created a world in which certain evils are surds with no resolution or redemption?

Despite these questions, Farley's *Tragic Vision and Divine Compassion* poses a central question which the Christian tradition must face: Is there a place for a category of "radical suffering"? And if so, how are we to understand the power and providential activity of God? Her discussion of radical suffering and of compassion as a power is the real strength of the book. It suggests interesting connections to recent feminist works which redefine divine power as the power of compassionate connection, such as Rita Nakashima Brock's *Journeys by Heart: A Christology of Erotic Power* and Anna Case-Winter's *God's Power: Traditional Understandings and Contemporary Challenges.*

—GREGORY WILLIAM LOVE

Women in Travail and Transition: A New Pastoral Care. Ed. Maxine Glaz and Jeanne Stevenson Moessner. Fortress Press, 1991. 225 pages.

For those of us who continue to struggle with what it means to take women seriously in the church, this is a long-awaited, deeply validating, and very welcome volume.

A truly collaborative effort, *Women in Travail and Transition* reflects the ongoing challenge facing those who are integrating previously unheard or unspoken female perspectives into theories, research, and practices that have been almost exclusively male-generated and male-focused. The second wave of feminism, which began in the early 1960s, spawned an ever-growing body of literature across all fields of inquiry. That it has taken thirty years for such a book to come into being in the field of pastoral theology says something about the feat these editors and contributors have accomplished.

The church, theology, and pastoral care continue to be arenas of resistance to the particularity of women's experiences, primarily because attending to them challenges traditional structures, ideologies, and practices. Paradoxically, Christianity's gospel of inclusivity keeps these same spheres open to the struggle of what it means to be faithful in a complex and changing world. This is the vision and the tension behind these essays' articulation of a "new pastoral care."

As they move toward greater inclusivity, the contributors to *Women in Travail and Transition* are careful to recognize the limits of their experience. Their work represents denominational diversity, but it will be up to others to write "companion volumes" from perspectives that are not white, middle-class, and Western.

This caveat noted, the authors effectively "uncover" a significant number of developmental themes and issues shared by most women. Maxine Glaz suggests several: feeling personally and sexually vulnerable to invasion, struggling to separate from a mother with whom a daughter simultaneously identifies, and the rhythms of puberty, menstruation, pregnancy, delivery, and lacta-

tion. For Glaz and others, these themes provide opportunities for fresh theological reflections.

The majority of the essays revolve around the previously unnamed, avoided, or minimized travails many women experience in contemporary life. At least one chapter is devoted to each of the following: internal and societal conflicts women face in their balancing of work and love relationships; biological difficulties ranging from premenstrual syndrome to menopause, miscarriage, infertility, and breast cancer; abuses such as incest, rape, or battering; various kinds of depression; single-parenting, divorce, and widowhood. Women struggle with all these issues in the context of a patriarchal society.

Individually and as a unit, the essays offer a sophisticated engagement with leading researchers and theorists of women's psychological development. Pioneering works by Karen Horney, Jean Baker Miller, Nancy Chodorow, Carol Gilligan, Mary Field Belenky, and Anne Wilson Schaef are woven into the discussion throughout the volume.

Another compelling aspect of *Women in Travail and Transition* is its consistent pastoral sensitivity to the needs of both those who suffer and their caretakers. At every step of the way, the authors provide suggestions and answers to the perennial question, "What do women want?" For example, at the conclusion of their fine chapter, Mary James Dean and Mary Louise Cullen set forth three things women in pain need: accurate information to help them create a deeper understanding of their female identity, "a context for sharing feelings and exploring spiritual questions, and a supportive theological presence to listen" (p. 104). Women who have been battered in marriages or by certain religious tenets require "understanding, sincere compassion, patience, tenacity, and the inclusion of women within the total structure of the church" (p. 137).

Women in Travail and Transition presents real challenges. It raises questions both explicitly and implicitly that may leave some readers frustrated. Those not familiar with the terms and terrain

of psychological inquiry may find some of the discussions and debates difficult to follow. Those not sympathetic to the nature of women's issues may find it hard to gain sympathy for the effort. Those wondering about the theological foundations of the new pastoral paradigm may find the biblical allusions and "unsystematic" theological reflections provocative, but not substantive enough to satisfy. Those looking for a thorough integration of insights from feminist psychologists with feminist theologians may be disappointed. Whether these are strengths or weaknesses is up to each reader to decide for her or himself. Each of these critiques may have more to do with the freshness of the subject matter than with any major flaws in the presentation. Tidier discussions and conclusions may well be premature.

After all, this is a time of transition—simultaneously unsettling and exciting—for women, men, families, and the pastors who share the journey. Maybe we need to sit with the discomfort and uncertainty for awhile. Perhaps for the first time we are being asked to listen—really listen—to the cries "as of a woman in travail, anguish as one bringing forth her first child" (Jer 4:31 [RSV], as quoted in the Introduction, p. 1). Here is a long-overdue first child of those re-visioning the theory and practice of pastoral care with women's experience in the foreground.

—CAROL J. COOK

Handbook for Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling. Ed. Howard W. Stone and William M. Clements. Abingdon Press, 1991. 368 pages.

This *Handbook* will make more sense to those who are familiar with Howard Clinebell's primary text, the enlarged and revised *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling* (1984). Those who have met Howard Clinebell, Howard Stone, and Bill Clements have a sense of how warmly many of Clinebell's colleagues feel about him. The *Handbook* is still worthwhile reading for those not familiar with Clinebell's text in pastoral care and counseling and who do not

know how highly regarded he is by many in the field, but it will make less sense as a companion volume to Clinebell's text. The editors seem to assume the readers' familiarity with Clinebell's work, but the contributors to this anthology rarely make reference to it. The editors state in their introduction that the contributors to the volume "have chosen this means to wish him well in his continued ministry of lecturing, writing, and consulting." It is not clear whether these wishes are extended on the occasion of Clinebell's retirement from his position as Professor of Pastoral Psychology and Counseling at the School of Theology at Claremont.

The *Handbook* is an anthology of sixteen chapters divided into two major parts. Part One concerns foundations of pastoral care and counseling and includes two further subdivisions: (1) theology and ethics; and (2) social dimensions of pastoral care. From these foundations, Part Two focuses on the practice of pastoral care and counseling with three subdivisions: (1) imagination and prayer; (2) grief and depression; and (3) marriage and family. The editors claim that although the *Handbook* can stand alone on its own merits, it will find its greatest use as an extension of, or supplement to, Clinebell's primary text in introductory seminary courses. They suggest that one use the two volumes together and recommend conversation and dialogue between chapters in Clinebell's *Basic Types* and chapters in the *Handbook.* However, because the two books are organized so differently, I found it difficult to imagine using the texts this way except for obvious parallels in respective chapters on bereavement and grief or marriage and family.

Several of the chapters are particularly engaging as essays in their own right. James Poling's chapter on "Ethics in Pastoral Care and Counseling" outlines an ethical method that takes seriously the relationship between suffering and power and is critical of the ideology of a dominant culture. Bridget Clare McKeever's chapter, "Social Systems in Pastoral Care," discusses the limits of family systems theory in dealing with the attempts of relatively healthy

families to maintain growth in a "wider systemic web" which does not support that growth. In his essay on polygamy in African culture, Masamba ma Mpolo points to the socio-cultural factors influencing traditional African views of marriage and the church's response. The McKeever and Mpolo chapters—along with a third, entitled "Pastoral Care Across Cultures," by Paul G. Schurman—represent best the growing edge of pastoral care.

In Part Two, Christie Cozad Neuger recounts powerful stories of her use of imagery therapy with persons in situations of depression, transition, and grief. Unlike most of the contributors, Charles L. Rassieur clearly draws upon Clinebell's six-point framework for achieving one's potential ("Career Burnout Prevention Among Pastoral Counselors and Pastors"). In "Sexuality and Pastoral Care," Carolyn J. Stahl Bohler interweaves traditional theological themes such as creation, fall, biblical critical awareness of context, forgiveness, and church in a refreshingly straightforward discussion.

Before reading it, I had expected the *Handbook* to be a "how-to" manual with specific information and extensive illustrations of Clinebell's "holistic liberation-growth model" of pastoral care and counseling. I also expected that the contributors would critically assess Clinebell's work and illuminate its value and its limits. Perhaps that is what the author of each chapter had in mind while writing, but this is not at all clear. The volume would be stronger and more of an honor for Clinebell if the authors had more explicitly and critically engaged his work as they drew upon his and other major sources in the field of pastoral care and counseling. Although the authors all completed graduate studies at Claremont School of Theology or served as faculty colleagues with Clinebell there, one would still expect them to identify some of the limitations of his work. For instance, can one model for pastoral care and counseling really be all-sufficient?

I was surprised and a bit chagrined that the first chapter, "Pastoral Counseling and Theology," was written by a systematic theologian (John B. Cobb, Jr.) rather than a pastoral theologian. I

understand that Cobb is a process theologian and a longtime colleague of Howard Clinebell. I did appreciate the organization and thoroughness of his discussion of issues important for pastoral counseling. Although I support lively, mutual dialogue between pastoral and systematic theologians, I think pastoral theologians should write the chapters on pastoral counseling and theology without having to pull in a systematic theologian to "help us get started."

—NANCY J. GORSUCH

Acknowledgments

"Mark 10:1-12: Text of Divorce or Text of Interpretations?"

An earlier form of this article was presented in a seminar on hermeneutics at Princeton Theological Seminary.

—MARK K. GEORGE

"Conspiracy Among Idols: A Critique of Deconstruction from the Afro-Caribbean Religions"

My appreciation to Dr. Mark K. Taylor for providing bibliographical sources on the topic of deconstruction.

—CARLOS F. CARDOZA ORLANDI